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GLOOM AND GOLD IN EZRA POUND

Robert Fitzgerald

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ENCOUNTER

JULY 1956

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Edited by STEPHEN SPENDER *and* IRVING KRISTOL

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This Month's *ENCOUNTER* :—

ALL ABOUT EQUALITY

THE subject of equality is very much in the air. According to the leader of the Labour Party, equality is what socialism, in 1956, quite simply "is about." For their part, the Conservatives seem also to have assented to the proposition that equality is one of the legitimate goals—but not necessarily *the* legitimate goal—of public policy. In this month's *ENCOUNTER* we publish the first of three articles by Mr. C. A. R. Crosland, in which an attempt is made to define the socialist thesis—to explain, in other words, what it is that equality itself "is about." In future issues we shall present other points of view on this subject, some of them diametrically opposed to Mr. Crosland's. We have no wish, at this point, to rush in where our contributors have still to tread. But we would like to raise the question: just how *real* is this issue of equality? And, as it happens, this question is one to which we think we have been given a kind of answer.

Our readers may remember (as these editors are not likely to forget) the fuss that was caused, some months ago, by our publication of Miss Nancy Mitford's essay on "The English Aristocracy," and of the articles by Professor Alan Ross and Mr. Evelyn Waugh that followed. To say that we were astonished by all this commotion about U and non-U would be to put it mildly. And though we were naturally flattered and gratified to come across the most unlikely people reading *ENCOUNTER* in the most unlikely places, we also suffered some qualms of conscience at the same time. Was this interest *healthy*, we wondered? There was no lack of friends to assure us, in all benevolence, that we were the chance beneficiaries—or victims, as they were more likely to put it in their kindness—of a passing wave of *snobisme*. We were told that we had accidentally hit it rich on property that was, morally if not legally, the estate of the woman's glossy magazine, and that the quick profits of such poaching would never compensate for the loss of

esteem and repute we were bound to suffer. As it happens, the mechanics of publishing disburdened us of what otherwise might have been moments of acute editorial anguish: we prepare our issues and go to press so far in advance that, by the time these comments reached us, we had already worked the vein to its economic limits. Or so we thought. . . .

Well, it seems that that enterprising publisher, Mr. Hamish Hamilton, is better at this kind of engineering than we are. He actually dared to collect the *ENCOUNTER* articles, add some new material and drawings by Osbert Lancaster, and publish this collection as a book under the title, *Noblesse Oblige*. The critics were, on the whole, as cool to the book as some of our friends had been to the original articles. (It's a small world, to be sure, and possibly the critics *were* our friends.) They sympathised with the publisher at the book's having been delayed for several months because of a printing strike—at the time it may have seemed like a good idea, but now it was an old, damp squib; this whole subject was as dead as last year's fashion show, and the glamour of the moment was a lost fancy; who now cares about U and non-U . . . ?

They have had their answer: a sizable portion of the British reading public. As we write this, the sales of *Noblesse Oblige* are reaching the 40,000 mark and will doubtless soar higher. The subject may be distasteful to some; but there is no doubting that it is a *real* subject to many. And it is real precisely because it is—about equality, in its way.

"IN ITS way" is what the literary critics I would call the operative phrase here. No doubt the motives behind all this excitement about U and non-U are mixed. We suppose that there are those who are attracted by its possible uses in the process of social climbing, just as we are fairly sure that there are those whose belligerent hostility to all mention of the topic is a manner of executing (perhaps

unconsciously) a neat little U-turn: the whole thing is "beneath" them. But, whatever the motives, the fact remains. Granted that there is something pathetic about the eagerness of people to find out whether they are genuinely U, or how to become so. But the pathos is not in the people themselves; nor in the writers on the subject; but in the fact—the indisputable and obvious fact—that it *does* matter to them. It is the fact of "two nations," divided no longer by wealth and power but by language and custom; the crucial fact upon which the entire educational system of this country has been built; the fact which—now that the economic dimensions of class boundaries have so rapidly dwindled—is so distinctive a feature of British society as against other, comparable countries; the fact which, joined to other facts of the same order, is now moving to the centre of British politics. Whether or not it is accurate to say that socialism is about equality, there appears to be no question but that all England will be up and about equality for a good while to come.

NOTES ON OUR CONTRIBUTORS:—

C. A. R. CROSLAND was Member of Parliament (Labour) for Gloucestershire South, 1950–5. He has just completed a book, *The Future of Socialism*, which Jonathan Cape will publish in the autumn. The three-part series, "... About Equality," which we are publishing in this and succeeding numbers, represents abridged and revised versions of chapters of this book. ... ROBERT FITZGERALD, the American poet, is now living in Italy.

... FRANÇOIS BONDY is the editor of our sister review in Paris, *PREUVES*. ... HERBERT LUTHY, Swiss historian-journalist who now lives in Paris, has frequently contributed to *ENCOUNTER*. He is author of *The State of France*, published last year by Secker and Warburg. ... VITALIANO BRANCATI, one of the most important modern Italian novelists, died in 1954. ... DANIEL BELL is labour editor of *Fortune* magazine in New York, and lecturer in sociology at Columbia University. ... COUNTESS NORA WYDENBRUCK, author of *Rilke, Man and Poet*, has just completed her autobiography, *My Two Worlds*, which Longmans will publish in September. ... MARCUS CUNLIFFE is lecturer in the Department of American Studies, Manchester University. ... RICHARD LOWENTHAL is Foreign Affairs commentator on the *Observer*. ... R. A. SCOTT-JAMES was formerly editor of *Britain Today*. ... JAMES MCAULEY is a well-known Australian poet. ... RICHARD SELIG, a young American poet, is co-editor of *Oxford Poetry*, 1955, published by the Fantasy Press. ... ROY FULLER's new novel, *Image of a Society*, is being published by Andre Deutsch in the autumn.

The final instalment of Mr. Berlin's series on "A Marvellous Decade" should have simply been entitled "Alexander Herzen," without sub-title. Our announcement that these essays were to be collected in book form and published by Collins was, we now learn, based on a misunderstanding. Our readers, however, will be interested to hear that Mr. Berlin has written a long introduction to Herzen's *From the Other Shore*, which has recently been published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

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Short Story COMPETITION

ENCOUNTER magazine is offering a prize of £100 for the best short story in the English language by an Asian or African writer. The following have agreed to act as judges:

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(Head of Department of English, Hong Kong University)

JOHN MORRIS

*(Controller, B.B.C. Third Programme, and sometime
Professor of English Literature, Keio University, Tokyo)*

STEPHEN SPENDER

(Co-editor of ENCOUNTER)

There is no limitation as to subject, but the following rules are binding on all competitors:

1. No competitor may submit more than one story. It should not have been published before and must not exceed 5,000 words in length.
2. Entries should be addressed to ENCOUNTER (Story Competition), 25 Haymarket, London, S.W. 1, to arrive not later than January 31st, 1957. Competitors should state their nationality.
3. All entries must be typewritten and accompanied by English stamps or International Reply Coupons, together with a self-addressed envelope for return. Entries cannot be acknowledged.
4. The winning entry will be published in ENCOUNTER, which shall also have first option on any other entries considered suitable for publication at current rates. The judges reserve the right to withhold the prize if, in their opinion, no suitable entry is received.
5. The judges cannot enter into correspondence about entries and their decision is final.

C. A. R. Crosland

“... About Equality” (I)

A New Look at an Old Problem

AT ANY time up to 1939, the case for greater equality in Britain, at least of incomes, seemed self-evident. By making the rich less rich, the poor could be made less poor; and to all those with a social conscience this seemed a sufficient and conclusive argument. It appealed to every humanitarian sentiment, and to ordinary feelings of justice and compassion; while on the intellectual plane it was powerfully reinforced by the “welfare” arguments of utilitarian thinkers. And it appealed not only to socialists but also to Christian reformers, social workers, and Liberals from Lloyd George to Beveridge. Poverty in the midst of plenty seemed obviously repugnant, and great wealth a disgrace because it appeared the cause of great poverty. To take some caviar from the rich, and distribute it in the form of bread to the poor, was a clear moral imperative.

But we have now reached the point where further redistribution would make little difference to the standard of living of the British people; to make the rich less rich would not make the poor significantly less poor. If we now distributed all surtax incomes amongst the working class, the latter would gain by at most a few shillings a week per head; and nobody supposes that even this is possible in practice. The main prop of traditional egalitarianism has thus been knocked away by its own success. The

“welfare” argument, while it still justifies very selective measures of redistribution towards small groups whose average gain might be significantly large, no longer clearly justifies overall measures of redistribution between classes; and if we want more equality the case for it must rest on statements largely, if not entirely, unrelated to economic welfare.

Nevertheless the case can still rest firmly, as I believe, on certain value or ethical judgments of a non-economic character: on a belief that more equality, even though carrying few implications for the sum of economic satisfaction, would yet conduce to a “better” society. This I believe to be the case for three reasons, relating respectively to the diminution of social antagonism, to social justice, and to the avoidance of social waste. I shall consider these in turn.

Discontent on the Left

ONE of the most disturbing features of contemporary British society is the widespread persistence of collective discontents and resentments, and of overt, explicit group hostilities. These are especially evident in industry, where they express themselves in unofficial strikes, lack of co-operation, and a general atmosphere of suspicious antagonism. I am not, of course, suggesting that industrial relations are worse in Britain than in most other countries—they are not. But are they not worse than one would expect, considering

the absence of the normal economic irritants? Traditionally, industrial antagonism is caused by unemployment, poverty, falling real wages, or a wage offensive by employers. None of these factors is present in Britain, yet a surprising amount of unrest persists. This surely suggests that it has not an economic, but a sociological cause.

A parallel phenomenon is apparent in the sphere of politics. A country's political deportment, and the atmosphere of its debates, will normally reflect—allowing, of course, for the vagaries of national character—the degree of underlying social tension. Now British Parliamentarians are well accustomed to receiving, and graciously acknowledging, the admiring congratulations of foreign visitors on the tolerant and friendly atmosphere of the House of Commons, the gentlemanly conduct of debate, the inter-party social intercourse, the absence of fisticuffs and unruly scenes; and undoubtedly these agreeable features of our political life are conspicuous by international standards. But before we deduce from this the absence of serious social tensions, we must consider whether these easy-going inter-party relationships are not misleading inasmuch as they distract attention from the true locus of political bitterness, which is now within the Left itself. The most angry quarrels in recent British politics have erupted, not in the Chamber of the House of Commons, but in upstairs committee rooms, at the annual Labour Conference, and in local Party meetings.

These quarrels on the Left were particularly violent for some years after 1951, when the bitterness was abundantly displayed in the ugly, long drawn-out history of the so-called "Bevanite" dispute. But this was only a particularly violent manifestation of the curiously strong underlying tendency within the Labour Party towards a suspicious, militant, class-conscious Leftism—a tendency which goes much too deep to be explicable in terms of the brilliant personality of Mr. Bevan, who merely articulated a resentment which was already there.

Nor can it be explained away as an in-

evitable reaction to Britain's changed position in a world dominated by America, Russia, and the hydrogen bomb. Certainly anti-Americanism, and a vague semi-pacifism and semi-neutralism, are obvious symptoms of the mood; anti-Americanism in particular is an almost universal left-wing neurosis,* springing from a natural resentment at the transfer of world power from London to Washington combined with the need to find some new and powerful scapegoat to replace the capitalists at home, their utility in this rôle being much diminished under full employment and the welfare state. But the world situation cannot provide the basic explanation. The actual divergences between "Left" and "Right" on defence or foreign policy were often far too trivial to account for all the bitterness; consider, for example, the ludicrously disproportionate fury aroused in 1951 by a dispute as to whether £300 millions more or less should be spent on rearmament out of a national income of £13,000 millions. Moreover this would not explain why the resentment should be concentrated in particular social groups, and at a particular point in the political spectrum. Anti-Americanism and anxiety over nuclear weapons are no more the real explanation of militant Leftism than anti-Communism was of American McCarthyism; in both cases these are simply rationalisations of some deeper discontent.

Is not the extent of this discontent in Britain surprising? Of course it is less than in certain Continental countries—but so it should be. One does not expect all countries to run the same political temperature at all times. We should expect extremism to be rampant in societies suffering from mass unemployment, or low living standards, or huge disparities between wealth and poverty. But we should not expect it in countries enjoying, as Britain does, full employment, social

* I use the terms Left and Right only as they are now conventionally, though oddly, applied. In fact if Left is taken to imply intellectually radical, and Right intellectually traditional, they should be transposed in their application to the two wings of the Labour Party.

security, rising real incomes, and (by historical standards) a marked equality in the distribution of incomes. And it is surely significant that other nations enjoying these advantages, such as the Scandinavian countries, can show no similar degree of bitterness on the Left, and no parallel to our militant Leftism. Is it just an accident that the one respect in which they differ conspicuously from us is in the degree of social equality and class stratification?

It seems at least conceivable that the persistence in Britain, despite all the social and economic improvements of the last two decades, and in the face of a naturally amiable and even sunny national character, of so much resentment, so many unofficial strikes, so many touchy, prickly, indignant, and frustrated citizens in politics and industry, with grudges against society and grievances at work, sending telegrams and passing angry resolutions, flocking to meetings not with badges, but with chips on their shoulders, peevishly waiting for someone to knock them off—it seems that this may be traceable to underlying sociological causes, and partakes, even if often sub-consciously, of that resentment against social inequality which is characteristic of class antagonism.

Economic Politics and Social Politics

THE possibility of a sociological cause has been rather neglected in this country, where we still tend to assume that politics, and industrial relations, should be interpreted in basically economic terms. But we should in fact distinguish between what may loosely be called Economic Politics and Social Politics.*

Economic Politics are characteristic of any country or situation to which a Marxist analysis can plausibly be applied. Thus they are typical of periods of growing pauperisation, depression and mass unemployment, falling real wages, and a sharp polarisation of

classes. It is at such times, when a direct clash of economic interest occurs between clear-cut productive classes against a background of material scarcity, that economic issues are the main determinant of political attitudes.

Social Politics are characteristic of periods of prosperity, rising incomes, full employment, and inflation, when attention is diverted from economic to social issues, not only for the obvious reason that as living standards rise, and the problem of subsistence fades away, people have more time and mental energy to spare for non-economic discontents, but also for another reason.

Prosperity is typically associated with rapid economic change—either the sharp change from depression to boom, or the steadier change characteristic of any period of rapidly advancing technology. Such changes inevitably cause large shifts in relative incomes. As a result, the income hierarchy gets out of alignment with the class or social hierarchy. The latter, based on socially recognised evaluations that have deep roots in the past and are backed by a heavy weight of tradition, cannot adjust itself with sufficient speed to changes in the former. Consequently, some social groups feel that their position in the social hierarchy is not commensurate with their new and higher income status, while others feel that their worsened relative incomes are not commensurate with their traditional position in the social hierarchy. Such feelings are exceptionally productive of class tensions and resentment, although these will not be located, as they are under Economic Politics, in the worst-off, but in relatively well-off sections of the population.

Examples of the latter groups, which feel their social position menaced, not indeed by absolute poverty, but by the prospect of relative humiliation as previous social relationships are disturbed by economic change, are certain sections of the European middle classes in the 1920's, threatened by inflation and turning to Fascism to protect their class position; or the old-family Anglo-Saxon upper class in the United States, left far behind in the economic race, and expressing its resentment in vehement support for the extremist

* Some American writers, with broadly the same ideas in mind, have distinguished between “class politics” and “status politics.” (v. *The New American Right*, ed. Daniel Bell, New York, 1955.)

wing of the Republican Party: or, in Britain today, certain salaried classes (e.g. teachers) or skilled groups (e.g. compositors, or members of A.S.L.E.F. on the railways) whose differentials have been narrowed by inflation, and whose relative income-position is much worse than it was before the war and than the degree of skill would appear to justify: or, again, the lower managerial grades in industry, who, having now lost much of their income advantage over the wage-earners, react by emphasising their social, non-pecuniary higher status.

Examples of the former groups, whose economic status has risen without a corresponding promotion in the social scale, are any *nouveau-riche* business class suddenly enriched by inflation or full employment, from Texas oil millionaires to small shopkeepers or sole proprietors, now highly prosperous but still socially insecure, feeling themselves slighted both by the gentry and the intelligentsia, envying the self-assurance of the one and the culture of the other, and growing resentful at their lack of social recognition: or, as so often in the U.S.A., immigrant groups of workers, for long excluded from the better occupations, who, having now finally achieved a satisfactory economic status, yet still encounter social snobbery and disdain from the native stock, and turn angrily to McCarthyism to demonstrate their 100 per cent Americanism: or, again, certain fortunate sections of the working class suddenly propelled by full employment towards an altogether higher income status than any to which they had previously aspired, yet still labelled and looked upon as "working class" or "labour"; or, more generally, the skilled, upper section of the working class whose earnings rise most rapidly at a time of rising productivity.

Surely it is these last two groups which, in Britain, are now the main source of both industrial and political discontent (though a subsidiary source is to be found in the penultimate one of the groups mentioned earlier, e.g. skilled railwaymen and teachers). On the industrial side, the industries with the worst relations, and the most susceptible to

outbursts of antagonism, are the coal-mines, the docks, and sections of the engineering trades. It is significant that the workers in these industries not merely enjoy exceptionally high wages, well above the average for industry as a whole, but have experienced a notable *relative* rise in the income structure without, however, gaining correspondingly in social prestige. The result is a marked discrepancy between the new economic and the old social status.

The Roots of Resentment

MAY not this discrepancy be the fundamental cause of these industrial discontents? Certainly this view finds support in recent sociological studies of both the coal industry and the docks. These studies all reveal an apparent obsession with low social status, which is stronger as income status has risen. And it is noticeable that, even outside the mines and docks, a large proportion of disputes are not only in high-wage industries, but also are not concerned with wages or working conditions at all. Rather they revolve around points of prestige and power: the failure to consult about overtime, the rights of shop-stewards, the dismissal of workers, the choice of foremen, and questions of discipline generally—all issues which appear to reflect a feeling amongst well-paid workers that their economic importance is not properly reflected in an enhanced social status and dignity.

Militant Leftism in politics appears to have its roots in broadly analogous sentiments. Every Labour politician has observed that the most indignant members of his local party are not usually the poorest, or the slum-dwellers, or those with most to gain from further economic change, but the younger, more self-conscious element, earning good incomes and living comfortably in neat new council houses: skilled engineering workers, electrical workers, draughtsmen, technicians, and the lower clerical grades. (Similarly the most militant local parties are not in the old industrial areas, but either in the newer high-wage engineering areas or in middle-class towns; Coventry and Margate are the charac-

teristic strongholds.) Now it is people such as these who naturally resent the fact that despite their high economic status, often so much higher than their parents', and their undoubted skill at work, they have no right to participate in the decisions of their firm, and have far fewer non-pecuniary privileges than the managerial staff. Outside their work they are conscious of a conspicuous educational handicap, of a style of life which is still looked down on by middle-class people sometimes earning little (if any) more, of differences in accent, and generally of an inferior class position.

It is, I think, this failure of social assimilation which creates antagonism, and explains its concentration in those groups which have risen or are rising economically, but whose social aspirations seem somehow blocked by our deeply-set class stratification.* Again one reverts to the contrast with Scandinavia, where, in societies with less rigid class divisions, people of equivalent economic status have a relatively much higher social status; and one remarks again the freedom of those countries from any corresponding discontents. In Britain we seem poised, uneasily, half-way between the extreme inequality of pre-war society, and the genuine equality of contemporary Scandinavia or the Dominions. We have achieved economic reform, and so raised the level of aspiration, but have left

our class system basically unreconstructed; and in some respects this simply gives us the worst of both worlds.

The Ideology of Betrayal

THIS explanation is, I believe, confirmed by the persistence of an unusual British phenomenon, the Ideology of Class Betrayal or Contamination. By this I mean the touchy, defensive, almost neurotic fear that “the class enemy” will somehow fatally weaken the working class, either by seducing its leaders away or insidiously corrupting their minds. This in turn sets up a defence mechanism, of which the most obvious manifestations are the deep hostility, couched in the language of class betrayal (“he’s gone over to the boss’s side”), shown to the worker who takes a supervisory or managerial post, and the antagonism towards trade union leaders, previously trusted figures, who “go over” by becoming members of nationalised boards. Even ordinary trade union officials are sometimes suspected of contamination if their way of life, their cars, or their incomes are thought to approximate at all closely (which they never do) to those of the employers.*

This attitude is absurdly irrational today, whatever may have been its justification fifty years ago. No one now rationally believes in a theory of irreconcilable conflict in industry, or that anything which helps the management must *ipso facto* hurt the workers, or that the most efficient workers should not rise as fast and as far as they can, or that

*It is sometimes said that there is no particular significance in this concentration of militancy in the better-paid section of the working class, since the skilled artisan class has historically always provided the radical and militant leadership for the workers. But there is no evidence for this in British labour history. During the latter half of the last century, the skilled workers, typified by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, stood throughout for extremely moderate policies; while the more radical New Unionism which sprang up in the 1880's drew its support from the unskilled and worst-paid workers. The exceptionally militant industrial action of the immediate pre-1914 years was again concentrated in relatively low-wage industries; while throughout the inter-war period it was the miners, then almost the worst-paid section of the working class, who were always the most radical element.

*It would be unthinkable in England for trade union leaders to be paid the sort of salaries which are quite normal in the U.S.A. Mr. Beck, for example, the head of the Teamsters' Union, in addition to a salary of \$50,000 a year, lives rent-free in a \$160,000 house bought by the union, not to mention having a union-owned Cadillac, plus caterers and gardeners as needed. “It’s a lovely place,” says Mr. Beck. “Downstairs I have an office and a bar, a movie-projection room, and a pool table. . . . There are two two-car garages, a swimming pool, and a bath house.” (Quoted in *Fortune*, September 1955, pp. 84-5.) No doubt this is an extreme example; but the contrast in attitudes between the two countries is still violent.

nationalised boards should be empty of trade union representatives; yet each of these beliefs is implicit in the ideology of class betrayal. (This ideology is thus wholly inconsistent with the reiterated claims, often made by the very same class "patriots," that *more* managerial posts should be filled by workers, and *more* trade unionists be appointed to nationalised boards.)

In any event such defensive fears would still be quite disproportionate in the light of the present massive strength of the working-class movement. They might be warranted if the working class had its back to the wall, and was in imminent danger of defeat. Indeed an ideology of betrayal and contamination is historically characteristic of minority racial or religious groups fearing persecution, or the loss of their identity by absorption into some larger mass. So some Negroes in the U.S.A. have a touchy suspicion of anything which smacks of "Uncle Tomism," and a nagging fear that their leaders or popular successes will be seduced into racial treachery by the white man's glamorous culture*; so, in the face of anti-Semitism, a section of Jews will aggressively over-emphasise their Jewishness; and so devout religious sects will lay down all manner of detailed prohibitions to prevent contamination by "the world."

But such desperate protective safeguards become absurd in a situation of strength; and there is something almost comical—though also highly damaging to the socialist ideal—about the entrenched and unassailable British working class displaying a deep sense of injury and betrayal when some of its members are rash enough to take the slogan of equal opportunity seriously.

Yet the persistence of this mood, despite its obvious irrationality, is significant. Reflecting as it does a deep-seated social insecurity and lack of confidence, it is eloquent of the strength of class-consciousness, and lends credence to the view that our class stratifica-

tion is a direct incitement to social antagonism.

It is sometimes said that one is doing something disgraceful, and merely pandering to the selfish clamour of the mob, by taking account of social envy and resentment. This is not so. These feelings exist, amongst people not morally inferior to those who administer such high-minded rebukes; and they are quite natural. It is no more disgraceful to take them into account than many other facts that the politician must attend to—such as the greed of the richer classes, who claim they must have higher monetary rewards and reduced taxation as an incentive to greater effort, patriotism being evidently not enough. If all envy (or all rapacity) could disappear by a wave of the wand, or by the peripatetic performance of Buchmanite plays, then well and good. But as it will not, it is a social fact of cardinal importance; and since it makes society less peaceful and contented, it is wrong not to try and adjust affairs in such a way as to minimise the provocation to it.

In fact, of course, the envy often takes a form which by no extreme of bigoted intolerance could be condemned as cupidity or selfishness, as when it is inspired by inequalities of educational opportunity. The upper and middle classes think it not reprehensible, but the mark of a good parent, to show anxious concern over a child's education and future prospects. They would be unwise, then, to censure the envy of working-class parents for the better education and the superior prospects of richer children than their own.

THE first argument for greater social equality thus rests on the hypothesis that some at least of our present discontents can be traced to social inequality, and would be diminished if that inequality were less: and on the further hypothesis that the consequent gain in contentment would outweigh the diminution in contentment of the present privileged classes.

Obviously these are not purely factual or descriptive statements, but contain a strong value element. It does not follow that they

* Cf. the sporadic attacks in the Negro press on Miss Eartha Kitt for her alleged preference for going out with white men rather than with members of her own race.

are any the less significant. Any statement about the contentment or welfare of the community is of this kind—statements against, just as much as statements in favour of more equality. But some judgments have to be made, whatever the uncertainties. We have to have either more social equality, or less, or the present amount; and politicians, in deciding which of these is the correct objective, must make some supposition about the welfare of the community. They have no excuse, merely because such statements can easily be shown to be of an ethical nature, for evading this responsibility.

It is to be noted that such statements are not statements about personal “happiness.” We might diminish the extent of *collective* antagonism and resentment, and so increase social contentment, without increasing the sum of *personal* “happiness” in the community. We still, of course, know too little about the relation between personal happiness and the cultural-social background to be sure what influence changes in the latter will have on the former. Thus one might take an extreme early-Freudian view, and largely dismiss cultural factors altogether. We all know now that people rationalise, and that their overt and conscious reasons are a bad guide to their “real” subconscious reasons. One might then argue that envy and resentment were only rationalised in social terms, and in reality were rooted in infantile experiences or sexual deprivation. Or one might adopt the attitude of those social anthropologists who argue that social traits are implanted by particular methods of suckling, weaning, and rearing new-born children, and are only indirectly dependent on wider social factors.

Such theories would imply in effect that some constant amount of discontent or frustration was endemic in society, or at least that the amount was impervious to social or economic reform. The only effect of such reform would be to alter the *direction* of the discontent, so that whereas previously it was externalised, and canalised into collective political and industrial antagonisms, now it became internalised in largely personal frus-

trations. In other words, if there were fewer political or social foes to act as the objects of psychological transference and compensation, new and purely personal objects would be found; but the amount of frustration would remain the same.

Even if this were true, I should not think that it destroyed the case for greater equality. For one thing, this can perfectly well rest on statements about social justice and social waste, discussed later in this article. But in any event collective resentments, articulated in group hostilities, have two especially undesirable characteristics as compared with purely personal ones. First, through the very fact of being collective, they feed on themselves, and become magnified and extended; and secondly they threaten, in a way which purely random personal frustrations do not, other exceedingly important values—democracy, social and industrial peace, tolerance, and even personal freedom.

But in fact I find it hard to accept the notion of a constant amount of discontent. I believe, on the contrary, that many of our collective resentments reflect—as does in certain countries the existence of a large Communist Party—a genuine and natural, even though largely subconscious, reaction against class stratification and social inequality: and that this must breed tensions which manifest themselves in envy, resentment, and antagonism. These can, of course, never be wholly eradicated from any society. But to the extent that they have a social cause, they can at least be reduced by social action.

Education and Inherited Wealth

THE second argument for more equality rests on a view of what constitutes a “just” distribution of privileges and rewards. Being in essence a simple moral judgment, it is not susceptible of proof or disproof; it must be accepted or rejected according to the moral predilections of the reader. But there appear to me to be certain respects in which existing inequalities offend obviously against social justice; and this is wholly irrespective of whether or not they create resentment.

First, I suppose that most liberal people

would now allow that every child had a natural "right," as citizen, not merely to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," but to that position in the social scale to which his native talents entitle him: should have, in other words, an equal opportunity for wealth, advancement, and renown. Complete achievement of this is, of course, an unattainable ideal, for the children of talented parents will start with a pronounced environmental advantage. But subject to this, all children can, if the society so decides, at least be given an equal chance of access to the best education.

This chance does not exist in Britain, since the wealthier classes can purchase for their children the overwhelming social privilege, denied to other children equally deserving but less fortunate in their parents, of a public school education. The matter is argued in detail in the third article in this series. Here it need only be said that the best public schools offer not only a superior education, but the further crucial advantages of the right accent, manners, and dependability of character: that these advantages are a major determinant of occupation, and hence of income, power, and prestige: and that their distribution is correlated almost exclusively with parents' wealth and class location, and only very indirectly with innate talent or performance. This seems to me an indefensible injustice, offending blatantly against the principle of equal opportunity.

A similar argument applies to the distribution of wealth. An equitable distribution requires first that wealth should be a reward for the performance of a definite service or function, and secondly that all should have an equal chance of performing the function, and so of earning the reward. The highest rewards would then accrue to those who, because they possess skills or services in short supply, can contribute most to national prosperity or enjoyment; provided only that the possession of these skills and services should not be artificially (that is, to a greater extent than can be explained by innate differences in talent) restricted to a privileged few.

This last condition, for the educational

reason just mentioned, is not completely fulfilled even in respect of incomes from work. But it is scarcely fulfilled at all in respect of incomes from property, since all citizens do not have an equal chance of acquiring property, and so of earning the due reward for the service of supplying capital. The condition would be fulfilled only if all private property were "earned," in the sense of representing the individual's own accumulated savings, the fruits of his personal effort and abstinence. But in fact the greater part of it has been inherited, and its distribution is related not to the owner's present or past performance, but to the accident of birth; and there is no equal opportunity for acquiring it. And it is, in addition, most unequally distributed, so that a small upper class of rich citizens all but monopolises the stream of unearned income.

The Rent of Ability

WHAT of rewards from work? No socialist (except for Shaw, and he not in later life) has disputed the need for a degree of inequality here, both because superior talent deserves some rent of ability, and because otherwise certain kinds of work, or risk, or burdensome responsibility will not be shouldered.* Thus one should pay differentially high rewards to the artist, the coal-miner, the innovating *entrepreneur*, and the top executive. But it is not clear that these considerations justify the present pattern of

* Shaw dismissed all such considerations rather cavalierly. On incentives to work: "Nobody wants her to work harder than another at the national task. On the contrary, it is desirable that the burden of work . . . should be shared equally by the workers. If those who are never happy unless they are working insist on putting in extra work to please themselves, they must not pretend that this is a painful sacrifice for which they should be paid." (*The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, p. 72.) The problem of "dirty work" was dismissed with analogies to titled surgeons and physicians, students dissecting dead bodies and analysing the excretions of live ones, the bearing and nursing of children, and even "ladies and gentlemen who attend to their own motor-cars." (pp. 74-5)

work-rewards either in principle (that is, with respect to the overall spread from top to bottom) or in practice (that is, with respect to whether the right people are receiving the higher and lower incomes).

In practice, they certainly do not. A definite proportion of people even in high earned income-brackets have found their way there by a rather easy route, and not solely by merit. This is not now generally true of large-scale private industry,* nor of course of the public service. But it is still to some extent true of small-scale private industry, where nepotism is by no means dead. It is still more true of City institutions, where many of the most lucrative posts even now are filled by titled semi-nonentities, or retired soldiers and sailors, wholly innocent of financial expertise; and the most coveted lower posts, after enquiries on the “old boy net,” from amongst those with a suitable college or family background. So long as this continues, the pattern of work rewards can properly be described as unjust, in that it denies an equal opportunity of attaining certain of the top rewards.

But supposing this were not the case, and that the recipients of different incomes were selected in an orderly manner, would the present overall spread of incomes still be justified? On this I feel rather agnostic. There are two uncertainties. First, how much should be allowed as rent of ability? This is a pleasantly ambiguous concept (though Shaw characteristically defined it as “the excess of its produce over that of ordinary stupidity”; but he adopted a rather ambivalent attitude on whether these rents should actually be paid, arguing that occasional freak incomes might not matter provided that they accrued to the possessors of lucra-

tive personal talents, such as, he explained, himself). It could be taken as a non-economic, normative concept, expressing not the money rent which the community *needs* to pay in order to elicit the ability, but the individual’s “worth” (in some sense) to the community. But if this were made the sole criterion (which of course it never has been, since only those abilities for which a popular demand exists have ever in practice commanded high rents—those of motor tycoons and film stars, not poets or philosophers), it is quite certain that we should get not more equality, but a degree of inequality which would be furiously (and rightly) resented by everyone. This is because the scatter of human ability and inventiveness is far wider than any known scatter, in modern societies, of monetary rewards; the “worth” to society of a Stevenson, a Faraday, a Ford, a Rutherford, or a Fleming, measured in terms of their contribution to future living standards or the abolition of disease, is not merely twenty times greater than the “worth” of the rest of us, but some hundreds or thousands of times.

But if we reject “worth” in this vague sense as the proper criterion, on the grounds that (assuming it to be biologically transmitted) it seems unjust and unwise to reward or penalise people to quite such a prodigious extent for inherited characteristics, we are left with rent of ability as an economic concept: that is, the additional reward which exceptional ability can in practice command from the community.

How large this should be is of course impossible to lay down in general terms. If we believe in equality, we can only say that we shall balance the possible loss to equality against the possible gain from exploiting the ability. The balance of loss and gain will depend on the supply price of different grades of ability; this raises the whole question of incentives, about which we still know very little. Some danger point must evidently exist at which equality begins to react really seriously on the supply of ability (and also of effort, risk-taking, and so on), and hence on the national income. Where exactly this point

* Though the words “now” and “generally” should be emphasised. A random sample of British companies in 1936 showed 172 directorships (8 per cent of the total, and 15 per cent if the largest companies only are taken) as held by titled persons. Almost half of these had either inherited their title or acquired it by prowess in the fighting services or sport. One large insurance company had, out of sixteen directors, two dukes, one marquis, one earl, one baron, and three knights.

lies, no one knows. I do not myself believe that we have reached it yet, or that the present 20:1 spread in post-tax incomes is really essential to incentive.* I therefore think that we should move slowly forward, concentrating on gross rather than net incomes, eschewing increased taxation on marginal earnings, and always preferring an increase in the lowest incomes to an attack on the highest: and after the next step forward pause, and scrutinise the repercussions, if any, on economic behaviour.

But the realignment of work incomes is not a particularly urgent task for the next Labour Government, partly because they constitute a distinctly lesser injustice than the two previously mentioned, and partly because a decision here is not a decision about incomes or wealth as a whole since measures to redistribute property will in any case significantly diminish the inequality of wealth.

Moreover the inequity in the sphere of work-rewards now resides less in the distribution of direct money emoluments, than of certain privileges and advantages which conventionally go with them. Thus industry is riddled with non-pecuniary differentials far larger than can be justified on grounds of efficiency: for example, in respect of holidays, sick-leave, working hours, and often superannuation. And this is only one aspect of a more general feature of our society, that wealthier people, either through the terms of their employment or through tax allowances, are relatively better able to cope with the financial problems of rearing large families, of sickness, and of old age, than poorer people who must depend mainly on the social services. Thus even if one could defend the present vertical distribution of direct money emoluments on the hypothesis that the entire

population consisted of healthy young bachelors and spinsters, it is much harder to defend the distribution of total advantages in periods of need in the light of the great variations in need between families. I believe that the vertical inequality in the distribution of these advantages amongst the elderly, the sick, and those with large families constitutes a definite social injustice.

A Waste of Talent

THE third objection to extreme social inequality is that it is wasteful and inefficient. If, as in Britain, the determinants of class make deep incisions and the space of free social movement is restricted, two undesirable consequences follow.

First, social intercourse between the classes is markedly inhibited, both by external differences in "manners" and behaviour, and by subjective consciousness of class. One of the strong attractions of Swedish or American society is the extraordinary social freedom, the relaxed, informal atmosphere, the easier contacts, the natural assumption of equality, the total absence of deference, and the relative absence of snobbery and of that faint, intangible but none the less insistent sense of class that permeates social attitudes in Britain. One does not ask that all Englishmen should suddenly take to calling each other "Bud," or altogether abandon their well-known national posture of reserved *hauteur*; but it would be agreeable if they should intermingle rather more freely and with rather less restraint than they do today, and if our social system generally were less fragmented and subdivided. But this is naturally a matter of personal taste and temperament; and possibly more reserved or inhibited Englishmen may not like the idea of a more mixed-up, egalitarian, and informal pattern of social life.

However, the second consequence of the British class system is a definite social waste, since it selects its leaders badly. If social mobility is low, as it must be in a stratified society, the ruling élite becomes hereditary and self-perpetuating; and whatever one may

* Of course any nominal spread of this sort, such as emerges from the tax tables, underestimates the true spread owing to the wide possibilities of tax avoidance. If one were to allow for perquisites and business expenses which in fact go to raise the recipient's personal standard of life, and for tax-free capital gains made possible by his business situation, the real spread of "rewards" from work would be very much greater than 20:1.

concede to inherited or family advantages this must involve a waste of talent.

Opportunities for rising are, it is true, more ample than they used to be; and any really outstanding working-class child now can, with an effort, reach the top. But even on the simplest grounds of efficiency this is not enough. In our highly complex and professional industrial society, the problem of leadership is not one merely of finding the tiny minority of brilliant geniuses, for there are far more responsible top positions than geniuses to fill them. We cannot be content with correctly distributing all the (as it were) alpha material, but must make the best use of our beta resources also. And here matters are far from satisfactory. Clever working-class children are still denied access to the public

schools, while the less clever but still potentially useful have only a rather uncertain access to the grammar schools; and there is certainly no perfect correspondence between natural talent and type of education. Moreover, as was observed above, inherited property, nepotism, and class favouritism all prevent a fair and effective competition, on merit alone, for the highest posts.

It follows that we are still not extracting the best from our population, or making the most exhaustive use of scarce resources of human ability. This is a definite social waste, and one directly related to our stratified social system which, by placing a premium on lineage, and barriers in the way of vertical mobility, prevents a genuine equality of opportunity.

Trees

The trees follow me into spring unwilling,
Lagging behind they hold out arms which
 end
In cold small hands. They try, staying where
 they are,
To think themselves some raiment. In the
 dark
I leave them standing in gardens between the
 houses,
Fish out a key for mine and go upstairs.
Morning is waiting patiently and knows
I and the trees and everything will be
Punctual where we meet in her good time.

Oliver Bernard

Robert Fitzgerald

Gloom and Gold in Ezra Pound

THE first of Ezra Pound's verses that I remember seeing were in the volume *Personæ*, borrowed when I was in school. In appearance this book had a style very distinct and rich. I admired, and found becoming to the poems, the generous, dense, and rough-edged white paper on which the black printing appeared luxuriously placed. A short poem called *Δωπία* seemed unforgettable to me, and has turned out literally to be so. The *Ballad of the Goodly Fere* moved me, and a little later I had to make an effort to understand why T. S. Eliot omitted it from his selection of Pound's poems. I thought nothing could be finer than some of the poems in *Cathay*, Pound's translations from the Chinese.

In one of his writings Ford Madox Ford said that *Cathay* was possibly the most beautiful book ever printed, and I found this a proper thing to say. But I liked everything written by Ford. When I was seventeen I had read his memoir and tribute to Joseph Conrad—picked out, I think, from a pile of library books on some lazy summer afternoon—a poorly bound, small, cheap book with no margins to speak of. "*C'est toi qui dors dans l'ombre*," said the first chapter heading, and the vivid, serious enchantment held to the last page. From Ford I learned how style might honour style in life and in writing—the clear line of style against the metaphorical shade. It is perhaps a sense of that background that makes one love with purity the art of writing. Ford loved it with purity, and I trusted him.

In those days a quiet interest in literature existed in the New York newspaper offices. The *Herald* had a weekly supplement, "Books," edited by Stuart Sherman, who often found a woodcut and a poem to place on the front page, with an essay by someone who cared about works of the imagination. Ford's love poem, "My brown-eyed squirrel, my soft dove," appeared on the front page of "Books." So did Ezra Pound's essay, "How to Read." Twenty-seven years of looking at literary supplements have not much blurred the emotions caused in me by these events—the first verse of Ford's that I had read, and the first prose by Pound. The gentle verse satisfied my ear; the prose rather opened my eyes. The writer gave a little list or curriculum of things that one should read as touchstones of literary art. Homer, Sappho, Cavalcanti, Dante. . . . A few things, each masterly in its kind. He put it with such spirit that I trusted him, too, though I felt a vague stir of callow resistance.

It is useful to learn things from someone who knows and imparts them openly with a view to instruct. But it is useful and also delightful to find things out for oneself, as it seems, even when in fact they are being suggested with courtesy and craft. So Pound's didactic writing never pleased me as much as Ford's anecdotes and reflections did. But in the authority they had for me at that early stage there was probably little to choose between the two men. I understood what each meant, and responded to it with confidence. Style was the essence that made literature

precious, and the achievement of style would be a writer's proper concern. I do not think that either of them made me suspect how great a labour this might be, or how great a part of the labour might be extra-literary.

As for Pound's instructions, of course no one would have followed them doggishly, nor paid entire heed to his categories. I know now that generalities and rules in these matters, come as they will to mind, do not count for much in comparison with particulars—the morning's discovery, or the night's discontent. Nevertheless I think that Pound's list, beginning with Homer, has served me. A few things, each masterly in its kind. . . . At eighteen it seemed to me entirely possible that I was going to read everything ever written. This notion did not outlast the university where I learned what it meant. Works in Greek and Latin could not be read, anyway, in the casual sense; they mainly had to be studied, and I found that this suited me in other literatures as well. If you are not employed, you can read all day if you are in a position to do so. If you are employed, you must work at your employment, and in particular if you are a writer you must write. You will do well, then, to read a few marvellous things until you half understand what they deliver and how it was done, and acquire other literary knowledge for yourself in the course of working. Pound's advice came to this in the end—a recognition of what the *métier* entails, or has entailed at least for me.

WHEN *A Draft of XXX Cantos* appeared in the United States, my friend Dudley Fitts reviewed it for *The Hound & Horn*, concluding, I remember, that the Cantos were “a gallant and proud attempt to assert the positive value of experience.” The phrase seemed to me rather desperate. As to the value of experience it appeared that there were graver doubts or difficulties than I had realised. At any rate, now I went to the Poetry Room in the Widener Library at Harvard, borrowed the Cantos, and spent a day reading them. I went away in confused exaltation, as if excited by

whiffs of rare spices, drunk on rarities of liquor—a banquet of style, or rather a vast sampling of styles in bits and pieces, here and there conveying some magical, strange image from an other-world, distant or past. Poetry may once have been *Hiawatha*, but there was no doubt that in 1930 the Cantos were poetry. I could not tell what they asserted beyond that. I knew they were full of Protean life and music and hints of the universe of possibility.

They did not, however, unfold or compose a world seen “steadily and whole” in the manner of *Ulysses* and the great things that moved me most. Where so much was given, should that, too, be asked? I should have said, No; but I think I was disposed to say this too readily. The point is difficult. It seems that poetic quality may be caught by the ear, or by the specifically poetic sense, long after the mind has finished with it. But can it be complete unless the mind acknowledge it? When I use this word, “mind,” I understand something universal. As the Ephesian said, when we dream we go apart each into a world of his own, but when we think we have a world in common. Is the great work of poetry perhaps a dream that may be held in common—a dream to that degree permeated by mind? In the same season that I read the *Cantos* I read *The Wings of a Dove*, in the same library, and I emerged from that reading likewise affected in the higher sensory regions—mainly by a paradisaical sense of style. But the novel by James would later deeply engage and satisfy my mind. The *Cantos* never could, because they did not have it in them. I do not mean that they lacked the play of intelligence.

The point is indeed difficult, there being for example *Ash Wednesday* to consider. I have regarded this since I first read it as the best poem of its length in English. There are nevertheless parts of it quite untouchable by the universal faculty I have mentioned. Why, then, is it satisfactory? and would it be more so if there were no mystery in it? The answer must be that it needs the mystery but that the mystery is kept in hand; the song moves in a single direction, though with “steps and

stops" amid purely incantatory or dream material, and this movement is intimately lucid for the mind. There are, again, the poems of St. John Perse. In his preface to his own translation of *Anabase*, Eliot observed that there is such a thing as a logic of images—a fact that the poem demonstrated. But it could be said that the images interlocked within one overmastering image, or imagined world, internally consistent and evoked in a consistent style. The *Cantos* were multiple, multiple in both respects. . . . They were not on that account dull. I bought them as soon as I could, and kept them by me.

Early in 1932, being in Switzerland, I sent a note to Ezra Pound and went down to Rapallo to see him. We walked a little in the long room in his top-floor flat on the Via Marsala, looking out over the esplanade and the sea. In this room he had taught Yeats to fence, he said. There was a letter from Hemingway on his table; he took out the snapshot and showed it to me—the sun-blackened man grinning beside a shark he had caught off Cuba; the shark's belly, stripped open, displayed a man's undigested leg. Then he showed me his copy of *Ulysses*, inscribed at length and in gratitude by James Joyce. I felt numb with awe and with headache brought on by the chianti I had drunk on the train. The bearded and cat-eyed man before me had about him the hero light of the Irish. He had contended for good writing, for the making of it by himself and others, and he had kept clear of what was compromising and half-hearted. Moreover he was a workman; in his workroom he had an active filing system of cords strung overhead like clothes-line, to which he clipped or pinned envelopes or sheafs of material.

We walked out and around and down the *lungomare* in the damp January afternoon, Pound in a cape and wide-brimmed hat which he swept away here and there in salute to a promenader. He gave me dinner at a restaurant and we talked for a while before I went off to my train. I noticed that Ezra Pound, hero-light and all, was quieter in talk and less positive than his writing; he did not impose himself, as the writing rather did.

Two things he said were as "significant" as any man's casual remarks are likely to be. Of a trecento or quattroceto seal he was showing me, he said: "Here was a culture that got into every detail of life." Later on, I suppose in answer to some remark, he said in a troubled and reluctant way, as if to himself and as if it were an admission, "I live in music for days at a time." He did not mean the wordless music of the composers—Vivaldi, Antheil—who then interested him, but the music within himself, a visionary music requiring words. I knew that this applied to the *Cantos*, where the musical sense went free as a grasshopper among images and rhythms, styles perceived as tokens of culture or style in living.

GALLANT and proud, in Fitts's words, this life and this work seemed to me then. I could only faintly register what was flawed and darkened in it, nor did I suppose that there would necessarily be something of the sort in every life and work. His tone when he said he lived in music might have warned me that in that beautiful intelligence all was not going well. I remember that I worried a little when it appeared that one thing I should do at his bidding was to write a review of his *Cavalcanti*, to be printed by Eliot or Orage. The implied confidence in my writing gave me pleasure, but my position was that one did not interest oneself in reviews of one's own work. To have to suppose that Pound did, gave me a slight turn, as if he had asked me to hold a mirror for him while he put on his hat. The impression did not weigh upon me, however. Pound was certainly kind to me, as he is known to have been to many others. In any case I had soon to return from my premature excursion into the upper world of poetry.

In that year, 1932, Hart Crane dove into a ship's wake and drowned; Vachel Lindsay took poison and died halfway to a candle he had set burning at the top of a stair. I admired Crane's poems, and I knew and admired Lindsay. Not immediately but in the course of several years I understood something of the evil day that had come to each.

All the life we knew was going round a turn in those years, or over a pass; from one side we looked back at the war of 1914-18 and from the other we looked forward to—no one knew what, but worse and more of it. The struggle to keep alive became grimmer and more humiliating. It was as if the very air of the world turned crass and bitter and lost its milder lights. So much experience now got shoved and hustled into the void that I could comprehend how the “positive value of experience” might be something to assert. The 1930’s were years of complex trouble, and to allude to them is enough, for my point is only that they were killing or crippling for the arts; that few of us survived them undistorted or undiminished. It is clear that Ezra Pound did not.

In my own scrambling and mute existence of those years I did not keep in touch with him; I had nothing to keep in touch with him about. But I was aware of a gradual shift of attitude or orientation with respect to Pound, not only on my part but in general among people who cared for what he had cared for. In the exhortations from Via Marsala 12 his literary correspondents noticed the error of tone more often—the tone of a man no longer in touch, and the tone of presumption that dissipates the authority presumed. What had seemed high-hearted and really Olympian fun began to seem childish and beside the point. Then came the economic essays, the Social Credit campaign. As to that, I thought that no harm could come of a fresh mind in economics, and I certainly did not think that a poet should necessarily “stick to poetry.” One had to respect Pound’s effort to make these matters clear to himself, but the trouble was that he seemed to over-estimate—to put it temperately—the objective value of the results. Only a man working in isolation, without criticism or ignoring it, could have failed to see the fretfulness and poverty of argument in some of these essays and those in *Kulchur*; his examination of Aristotle’s *Ethics*, for example, was fairly alarming. By 1936 or 1937 a considerable descent must have been accomplished, from my point of view, for I remember then feeling

and saying with some heat that I preferred Eliot and Pound when they were young together, comparing verses in some restaurant in Soho, rather than in those later aureoles that in Pound’s case had got so askew. The maker of *Cathay* and *Personæ* and the handsomest Cantos was permitting himself too much licence.

Let the purveyor of good judgment in mellow retrospect pause, however, and ask himself what *he* was doing, or what anyone else was doing, to redeem that period more impressively. I myself (not that I flatter myself, but to answer the question) was holding on to a stanchion, merely hoping to stay aboard; and the gale disconcerted my elders and betters. In Yeats’s last work, it is true, no cheap or disheartened notes could be heard. Nor in Joyce’s final revel with the powers of darkness. But weariness or suffering touched the lesser stylists. And the figure that comes to my mind as expressive of that time is Ford Madox Ford. In his last years the master sometimes came to the Jumble Shop, a restaurant on Eighth Street in New York where dinner was not expensive. During the meal he had to let his tongue hang out, panting like a dog. It was an affliction he owed to his having been gassed in the First World War, but no other physical gesture could have told so well the extremity to which the fine stylist, the man of disinterested imagination, had come.

In 1940 I sat down one day to ponder the latest Cantos, those concerned with John Adams on the one hand and Chinese history on the other. In the latter sequence the poet had traversed the heavens for some magnificent panels of Imperial China, and much diversity of image and music. The Adams Cantos however were, to say the least, an over-extended communion with Adams’s style, excerpted from his journal and correspondence. Here dullness did finally set in; Pound had committed a monstrosity of composition, and it seemed a wilful one by a man who had held poetry to be the art of charging words with meaning. Then the war came, and I found one more thing to be depressed about when I heard what folly, as

it seemed, had overcome the man in Rapallo. No one else had gone quite as crazy as that.

II

IT IS an impression that I have, and it can be no more, that in his early years Pound chose the difficult thing to do, but later chose the easy thing, or the easier for him, having by that time so much momentum of his own to ride on that it might have seemed merely intelligent to ride, rather than to make again those efforts with hands and feet that in reality alone bear us up. One has made oneself master of an art; one may forget that it is largely in making oneself master of something that mastery consists. With his gifts and energy Pound had led a war against dead fashions in perceptions and writing; he had helped to set a kingdom free, to open it up to communication. But then it was as if he did not know quite what to do next—like so many *condottieri* who have been left biting their nails in isolation or even in ignominy after some slashing campaign. If they take up the sword again it will be in a ridiculous cause. There is a simplicity in the militant, and it may bring them to this.

Pound, however, had not been simple, but multiple, and like Odysseus he should have prevailed. Perhaps the very multiplicity became too much for him and dispersed him, so that he lost the Odyssean compactness of heart. To live in music for days at a time will mean letting go of the public coherence that the mind requires. But this is a difficult matter to judge, this, too. One sees and hears many things that other men unquestionably neither see nor hear; one should not deny one's *daimon* or one's genius. It may be necessary to reject public coherence in the forms provided by this world—in the intellectual professions—for the sake of sheer poetry and its dangers, and we have seen more than one instance of the rejection and its fruits. But may one then undertake to join, or indeed to lead, the dialogue conducted by men trained in the public disciplines? Pound could never submit himself to the humble rigour and patience of thought that the university men and the lawyers and

philosophers must practise. In a sense he did not have to; he comprehended at once much that they would acquire with labour. And he saw their fault—a kind of voluntary stupidity into which fear and malice entered. But he did not at first, and perhaps need never have, set himself apart from their community and overcrowd them as he did. Saying to one's brother "Thou fool" may become a bad habit. The penalty—is it not that?—can be seen in a mild form in his sudden diffidence, in later years, before Santayana, who simply found his conversation too disconnected to follow.

Early in 1948 I heard a friend of mine read aloud the "Pull down thy vanity" passage from the *Pisan Cantos*, and I thought it sounded like good news. A quarter of a century before, Pound had been able with humility to address the God of waters in his little Venetian litany; perhaps what had now happened to him had brought him back toward some similar compunction, a human feeling of place and scale. I then read the *Pisan Cantos*, re-read all the *Cantos*, and concluded that a new twinge had indeed occurred, though it had scarcely carried all before it: "*Tard, très tard, je t'ai connue, la Tristesse. . .*" As to the *Cantos* taken all together, it seemed to me now that they were poetic sketch-books, fixing in words at times evanescent but marvellous things in a fine economy, turning myth to something immediate:

"It is Cabestan's heart in the dish."

"It is Cabestan's heart in the dish?"

"No other taste shall change this."

And she went to the window and cast her down. . . .

I thought Pound's *congeries* could be called "notes from the upper air," if one wanted some, to set against contemporary notes from underground. But the sequence of notes—of elegant allusions—tended to be a sequence of interruptions, one parenthesis within another, and as an ordering principle for a large work of art I now doubted that this would do. For the musical qualities of language—of a number of languages—rhythms, speeds, and tex-

ture, no one alive had an ear of greater range and delicacy. But the *Cantos* were not a composition in the exacting sense of the word. Of the best passages it would be true enough to say that no one else could write so well; of the worst it would not be going too far to use the opposite superlative.

As you come to the final cantos of the *Purgatorio* of Dante you find that you have living within yourself a certain vision and a certain emotion that are well beyond anything to be experienced in Pound's or any conceivable sketch-book. This effect is due to what Pound mentioned, in "How to Read," as "architectonics, or the form of the whole." Let each kind of poem be valued for what it is, but let the difference, and the difference in value, be kept in mind. So, at least, I said to myself on the occasion of the republication of the *Cantos*. Then the admirable prose translations of Confucius were published, and in 1954 the *Literary Essays*, edited by T. S. Eliot with a just and faithful introduction. A number of these were first published long before my time; I had never read them; and I found them as exciting as if I had just opened *The Egoist* in 1914 or *The Little Review* in 1918—that is, quite exciting. In an American quarterly called *Shenandoah* I read Pound's review of *Ulysses*, reprinted in French from the *Mercure de France* of 1922, and it struck me as the best essay I had ever read on that work. But the last essays in Eliot's selection were of 1934, and in them the frantic tones of the later prose had already begun to appear.

Now there are the verses of the *Chinese Classic Anthology* and the newest *Cantos* of all, 85–95. The *Anthology* is a beautiful feat, which my soul delights to honour—the work of a great gift and of a lifetime spent in listening to the styles possible in English verse. Why is it so obviously, and so much better than the recent *Cantos*, in one or two of which the Chinese written character has the lion's share of distinction? Here again I venture upon critical speculation, if that is not a contradiction in terms. Farinata the Ghibelline, who stood up to his

chest in hell, was endowed by Dante with clear vision of things distant in time; but he did not see the present, did not, as we say, know what the score was. With all proper reservations, the figure might do for Ezra Pound in his later condition. At the other end of historical time and terrestrial space he lives, in princely imagination, through texts with which he can be at ease perhaps because they are untouched by the tragic conviction and faith of the West. The case is too impressive and peculiar for easy moralising. But I feel that I must take a further step now and inquire as to whether or not self-centred human pride at a certain point becomes incompatible with sanity or honesty or both.

Among the works of Ezra Pound is the transcript in about four hundred typewritten pages of his radio talks from Rome during the war. This transcript is published on microfilm by the Library of Congress, from which anyone who wants it can obtain it for about three dollars. It is certainly, from every point of view and all "politics" aside, one of the poorest productions ever thrown off by a man of genius. Few people seem to have read it, and I imagine few would care to. I went through this transcript the year before last with a kind of disbelief, the deliquescence of taste and style was so complete. I could take a great deal of rage against the snakes of finance and I could well see the point of scorn for Roosevelt's public insincerities. Even anti-Semitism could be forgiven if it were what it had seemed to me in Pound before—an almost innocent vice, partly echoing the Potash and Perlmutter era of comedy in America. But it was not like that, nor were the other contents in general anything but chaotic and unworthy. The style, the quality of feeling, in these radio harangues was abysmal. And style—why, the exactions of style were precisely what one had heard of long before from Ezra Pound.

So the irony that seems a constant in human affairs had operated in this case with singular power. He who had praised the sane construction, the clear, moving line, the fine thing held in the mind, had ended in ramshackle and noisome fantasy, in a clogged

and static obsession—no fine thing held in his mind but the most vulgar and violent of contemporary passions. The offence for which Pound had been indicted by a grand jury in the United States was no more serious than the offence he had committed against his own standards, against himself. I think that Pound at twenty or thirty would have thought hanging an entirely appropriate reward for the author of those radio scripts! By the mercy of contemporary psychology—to say nothing of common sense—the author of them would surely be held not responsible for his words; but here we come upon a further irony. When Pound was brought back to the United States in the fall of 1945 after his arrest and detention in Italy, he and his lawyer did not choose to stand trial and plead insanity as of 1941; they chose to avoid the trial by a plea of insanity as of 1945. Something had snapped, he is supposed to have said, in the cage at Pisa. The choice of this plea seems to have put Pound's head in a vice of pretence from which neither he nor anyone else has been able to wrench it. If he should be declared sane now, he is by implication committed to the position that he was sane when he wrote his scripts for Radio Roma, and on that premise he seems to have a choice of admitting his offence or of being convicted of it.

AN INTELLIGENT man remarked to me not long ago that this situation reminded him of the one in Pirandello's *Enrico IV*, in which the principal figure must continue to play his own madness brilliantly because he cannot face a return to sanity. It is not that simple, of course, in either case: for one thing, the part to be played is no doubt partly genuine and extremely con-

genial. But it has been possible to suspect, in the last few years, that Ezra Pound in St. Elizabeth's was not only being but playing at being Ezra Pound. This would comprise a certain repertory, as *Personæ* and the *Cantos* years ago made clear to us. It would necessarily include the man who wrote the radio scripts with only an occasional inkling, I feel, of what he was doing. This would require, in support, another and not very sympathetic figure—one who perhaps put in his appearance ambiguously years ago—a cagey propagandist for himself. But amid the company, or perhaps apart from the company, there must be the great man upon whom I called when young, the generous spirit that discerned and loved and prompted good work in letters, the friend valued by Eliot and Yeats.

*In the gloom the gold gathers the light
against it.*

Ezra Pound's place in the story of poetry is not in question, and with every year it becomes better discriminated and understood. Hugh Kenner's devoted and resourceful study of Pound's verse has pled successfully against many, though not all, of the possible objections. In this note I have tried to suggest what it has been like to be a writer twenty-five years younger, and interested, during Pound's lifetime. It goes without saying that all of us who practise the art of poetry are indebted to him. The work I have been doing lately would have been done otherwise and not so well if it had not been for Pound's work and his critical stimulus. Reading over what I have written here, I am aware of its inadequacy; but I hope that it is a truthful tribute, and not without affection.



Young Spain and the Old Régime

François Bondy

*Los laberintos
que crea el tiempo
se desvanecen.*

(from "poema del Canto jondo"
by F. Garcia Lorca)

"FRANCO's Spain is a country living under a totalitarian régime, with its single-party rule, its monolithic press, its regimentation and censorship. . . ."

"The Franco government has suspended the publication of the two liberal literary reviews, *Insula* and *Indice*. . . ."

During the past few months, statements such as these have frequently appeared side by side, and this juxtaposition suggests—to me at any rate—a certain contradiction. A totalitarian régime in power for seventeen years does not kill liberal journals, for the simple reason that it does not tolerate their

existence in the first place. On the other hand, would a non-totalitarian régime be able to suppress, by simple decree, periodicals which do not even concern themselves with politics?

Spain unquestionably is "the land of paradox" described by Julian Marias, one of its leading contemporary thinkers. May not, however, some of the paradoxes we encounter be due to our own superficiality and vagueness, our lack of precise information, our preconceptions? What exactly is this régime which appears so eccentric in relation to Europe? Instead of starting out with the usual confident assertions and exclamation marks, it may be wise to adopt the Spanish punctuation system, which calls for a question mark to be placed at the very beginning of an enquiry. One may then consider the uncertainties of the régime—so much more interesting than our own certainties.

The Dissidence of the Intellectuals

TO BEGIN with an impression that I formed in Madrid, and which was subsequently confirmed in other cities: the mood of the intellectual world as a whole, ranging from the aged celebrities of literature to the student youth, is openly one of indifference. In no intellectual *milieu* is there the faintest trace of enthusiasm for the Caudillo and his state.

This state of mind can assume different forms: refusal to concern oneself with public affairs; a very marked taste for erudite research; multiplication of small literary circles (*tertulias*) and "little magazines" devoted to poetry; fascination with the intellectual life of freer countries—France above all; immense curiosity about everything coming from abroad, including the work of Spanish refugee scholars; etc. This attitude can reach the point of almost open defiance of all political dogmas, as in the case of the Congress of Young University Writers, laboriously arranged by the authorities of Madrid's University City a year in advance, with the active support of the Rector, Don Pedro Lain Entralgo, and with the aid of subsidies from the Ministry of Education. This Congress, so long prepared and finally prohibited, published several issues of a printed bulletin that express a genuine "revolt of the younger generation." (Both the Rector and the Minister were subsequently dismissed.)

Speaking generally, one has the feeling that there is among the young—beyond the purely intellectual ferment—a widespread impatience and disgust with an ageing, ossified, and sometimes corrupt "ideological" bureaucracy that has a hold on all the available jobs and blocks the horizon in the name of Falangism: itself nominally a youthful, dynamic, and revolutionary movement. Thus the students, weary of having to pay compulsory membership fees to the Falangist students' union, the SEU, whose leaders were imposed from above, started to elect their own "*compromisarios*" (delegates) at the Madrid law faculty; they also gathered, within a few hours, thousands of signatures for the convocation of a students' congress to

overhaul the existing union and elect new leaders. Numerous youthful Falangists took part in this democratic movement, and the organ of the SEU, supposedly the authentic voice of Falangism, was itself suppressed in consequence of this incident and the clashes between students and militiamen which followed.

Evasion, indifference, revolt, frank aspirations towards greater intellectual and political freedom, allied to the need for a practical recompense after years of study—these are among the motivations behind the "rebellion of the young." To a large section of Spain's over sixty thousand students, all pathways appear closed and all hopes doomed to disappointment. Circumstances have induced a curiously mixed state of mind among this generation of intellectuals, hope mingling with despair, disappointed idealism with dissatisfied ambition. There is an estrangement between this youth and an ageing régime that incarnates the past and represents the defence of vested interests. In relation to the living forces of the present, Spain carries on under an *ancien régime* which symbolises neither hope nor the future, but which has a remarkable capacity for endurance.

Now an *ancien régime*—with all that goes with it, in the way of oppression and vexation—is something quite different from a modern totalitarianism, and indeed very nearly its opposite. One must not allow oneself to be taken in by the similarities present in all anti-democratic régimes, or even by the unbelievable monotony of a daily press as rigidly and totally regimented as that of a "people's democracy," and equally remote from the real problems of the country. The factor that is lacking in this régime is a pervasive dynamism, the burning conviction of representing or prefiguring the future. There are totalitarian countries where the opposition clings to stirring memories, to a consciousness of imperishable human values, but where it none the less suffers from a sense of being left behind, and ends by asking itself whether after all the future—however detestable it may be—is not on the side of the régime. Such an opposition may question its

own ability to communicate with a youth organised by the régime from early infancy, a youth moulded in the image of an oppression which has been "internalised" psychologically. We are indeed becoming aware that the achievements of the "dynamic" totalitarianisms in this sphere fall short of their own hopes and of the apprehensions of their critics. Our retrospective knowledge of Hitler's Third Reich, as well as our incipient understanding of the intellectuals and the younger generation in the U.S.S.R., suggests that even the most up-to-date totalitarianism is not as total as all that. But with the Franco régime, this question does not even arise.

What are we Celebrating?

I WAS in Barcelona last summer on the anniversary of the "liberation," i.e. the military *pronunciamento* which gave the signal for the civil war and which has consequently become the official holiday of present-day Spain. A great Barcelona daily, whose editor is a convinced Falangist, ran an editorial that day which said *inter alia*: "Numerous young people ask us: 'What exactly are you celebrating today? What is the content of this celebration and what does it signify?'" To this unorthodox enquiry the editor did not reply, as one might have expected, that the day marked the renaissance and the upsurge of a movement which had refashioned a greater Spain. Instead, he wrote: "We shall never forget that this day marks the success of a movement thanks to which Spain was able to remain outside the war, and Hiroshima was not named Madrid."

A truly realistic justification, and perhaps the best and most convincing that the writer could have found. But it is the justification of a Vichy régime—one which studiously avoids adventures and busies itself with keeping dangerous draughts away from the body politic.

That particular day was marked by official receptions and some military parades, but I gathered this only from the newspapers, not from anything which went on in the streets of the Catalan capital. The papers had like-

wise informed me that the day was going to be enlivened by an outburst of popular joy and gratitude taking the form of a great display of flags and bunting, but the only flags I saw were displayed by some buildings and shops in the centre of the town, while the suburbs were totally bare of decorations. Does Catalonia continue to be the least pro-Franco province of Spain because of its national and linguistic resistance to Castilian centralism? One thing is certain: the régime is not sustained by any wave of enthusiasm, on the part of anyone. It does not identify itself with the people, in the manner of the Fascist, National-Socialist, and Communist régimes. It is frankly hierarchical and conservative. Falangist "radical" demagoguery is no more than an empty façade, and the fiction is barely kept up. Thus in March 1956 the newspapers in Madrid (and possibly all over Spain) gave the greatest prominence to a ceremony which concerned the nobility: in the presence of the German Ambassador, Prince Adalbert of Bavaria, the "*hijosdalgo*" had renewed an oath in a form long ago discontinued, and this event took precedence over almost all the news from Spain or abroad. What could be more characteristic of a hierarchy-conscious *ancien régime* than this emphasis upon aristocratic tradition, caste distinction, and the importance of noble birth?

This régime reconciles itself fairly easily to the existence of a wide fringe of illiterates, unlike others which know no rest until all citizens have spelled out the same verses in honour of a leader or an infallible committee. Franco Spain does not number among its writers an Ehrenburg or a Simonov. It is a country where the opposition, or at least the independence and reserve, of the leading thinkers and writers is tacitly or openly recognised. This alienation, or non-co-operation, corresponds to what Ortega y Gasset had on pre-Republican days already described as the "secession of the best." But it is also the mark of a régime which, for all its oppressiveness, is too remote from the educated class—and perhaps from the mass of the people as well—to refashion it, affect its

mind, enter into living communion with it.

On the morrow of Ortega's burial, over a thousand students assembled at his grave in San Isidro cemetery, and it was one of them who spoke these words: "This homage is being rendered by the youth of Spain, by students without universities who have to learn almost everything outside the lecture hall, from books not prescribed for study and written in languages other than Spanish—students without teachers. Between Ortega and ourselves there is an abyss which cannot be crossed. Every day we become conscious that something has been lost. No one tells us what to study and how. No one tells us what purpose the university is supposed to serve. But we are certain that it serves us little, and that it ought to be changed root and branch."

These tolerated outbursts, or manifestations of free thought, as well as the official reactions and reprisals, culminating in arrests and trials, are not as self-contradictory as might seem. They belong to one and the same situation: that of an *ancien régime* thrown upon the defensive.

The Dangers of Reading

IN JANUARY 1954, on the occasion of the eightieth birthday of that great old man of letters, Pio Baroja, the review *Indice* took the occasion to render public homage to his career. Foreign subscribers obtained their copy of this issue, for the censorship authorities had first allowed it to appear; but they then stopped its sale in Spain. Why? A bishop had complained that the growing number of homages rendered to impious authors like Ortega and Baroja constituted a scandal, and the censorship bureau, frightened by its own liberalism, had had second thoughts. For the rest, the pressure exercised by the Church in the direction of stricter censorship is undeniable. Its official organ, *Ecclesia*, itself exempt from censorship by virtue of the Concordat, none the less demands an even more rigorous control of other publications, and on January 21st, 1956, expressed itself as follows: "Ortega was throughout his life the chief idol of laicism in Spain, and continues to hold this position

since his death, although there are reasons to believe that in his final hour he withdrew his apostasy. We fervently hope that he was able during his last moments to reconcile himself personally to the Supreme Judge before whose tribunal he appeared shortly thereafter. But his destructive work remains. . . . His apostasy began, like that of many others, with the unauthorised study of impious works, such as those of Renan, which shook his Catholic faith, despite the foundations laid by the priest Don Ramon Miguela and the Jesuit Fathers of the college at Malaga. But in fact the impious Renan was himself the victim of certain writings by German rationalists which he had read without the necessary precautions and without an adequate theological grounding."

In another recent issue, *Ecclesia* published an article by Mgr. Zucarro de Viscarrà, a bishop attached to Catholic Action, explaining that love and charity are due to unorthodox writers (of whom Spain counts not a few, from Cervantes to Unamuno), but only as love and charity are due to lepers and other carriers of infectious diseases, who must be isolated and not allowed to come in contact with persons other than those qualified to treat them.

It is worth noting that, for all this clerical zeal, the régime on the whole takes a less rigorous view of the benefits of quarantine. Some prohibited works are subsequently published in Latin America, and manage to reach Spain. It is also worth observing that while the censorship is intolerant, it is not always intelligent. The censorship of foreign films eliminates allusions to adultery and replaces the relevant passages of dialogue by others: there are at least two cases of husband and wife having been transformed into brother and sister by the censor—thus unwittingly substituting incest for adultery.

A Stable Régime

THE most remarkable thing about the Franco régime is its capacity for survival. How many oppositionists in Spain or in exile have been awaiting its fall almost weekly for at least eleven years! A strike of

transport workers in Barcelona and Madrid, of factory workers in Bilbao, and already the régime is thought to have been left stranded by a resurgent working class. A clash between students and militiamen, and promptly there are those who believe Spain to be heading towards a new revolutionary cycle marking the end of a régime "which nobody wants any more." It would be invidious to adopt an ironical tone towards the disappointed hopes of an emigration which naturally reads its own impatience into the future. But if one fails to understand the reasons for the durability of Franco's government, one makes it impossible to discriminate between passing tremors and an eventual decisive crisis.

What is it that enables Franco to stay in power? Clearly he could not have won the civil war without Italian and German intervention, but one must not underrate the traditionalist forces he was able to mobilise in his fight. Had he not been the representative of indigenous forces, how could he have resisted Hitler's pressure in the midst of war and marked out for himself an independence comparable to that of Tito in relation to Moscow? * And if today it is argued that he has been saved by the American alliance, and that he would have been overthrown by the democratic forces if the United States had not provided economic aid, arms, prestige, and protection, one must bear in mind the five or six years after the war during which Franco Spain lived in the most complete isolation: ostracised by the democracies and the Communist states (who today also pay it flattering attention), subjected to serious pressure, and yet able to survive without significant foreign aid. The régime has endured notwithstanding the hopes of large numbers

of Spaniards, notably Catalans and Basques. It has done so thanks to an apparatus of coercion of which the army rather than the Falange remains the core, but also thanks to the terrible memories of the civil war. There is in this phenomenon of survival an element of sheer fatigue, a yearning for quiet and stability at almost any price, which must not be underrated.

The first essential was to regain a "normal" life and to reorganise the country. True, Spain under Franco has not resolved its principal economic problems. The economic balance-sheet is unfavourable, in conformity with a system marked by corruption, nepotism, a multiplicity of contradictory regulations, autarchist tendencies, and a general discouragement of initiative.* But the balance-sheet is not entirely negative. The "*viviendas*," or low-cost workers' dwellings, are not of a high standard, but it is a fact that total house-construction this year will for the first time keep abreast of population growth. Again, Falangist syndicalism clearly bears an unpleasantly paternalist character, but its achievements must not be ignored. It appears that the Falangist system of syndicalism (i.e. compulsory pseudo-unionism) has not resulted in anything beyond a certain redistribution of incomes within the salaried class. But, at the local level, the minor functionaries who are supposed to embody the authority of the State in relation to the workers, often end up by voicing the latter's demands upon the State. Last summer a syndicalist congress witnessed the spectacle of delegates chosen by indirect election going much further in their demands than was pleasing to the government; since then, certain benefits, such as family allowances, have

* For proof of this relative independence one may consider the efforts made by the Spanish Government to have Jews of Sephardi origin exempted from the German and Vichyite racial laws, and the "repatriation" to Spain of several hundred Jews of Sephardi-Spanish origin specially released from the concentration camps. (Cf. E. von Kuehnelt-Leddin, "L'Espagne et les Juifs," *Etudes*, April 1956.)

* Anyone who wants to start a new branch of industry has to insert a declaration to this effect in the official journal, and wait for possible objections emanating from other firms which may fear competition. Such objections are generally sustained by the authorities if the sponsors are well entrenched and able to secure official support. Cases could be cited of industrialists being prevented in this fashion from manufacturing goods of which there is a real shortage.

been extended to agricultural workers.

But to return to the question: what is it that has enabled Franco to hold out? In discussing this topic with Spaniards I was reminded of a visit to Poland in 1947, in the course of which I met civil servants clearly hostile to Russia and Communism, but who did not withhold their co-operation from an unpopular régime when it was a question of reconstructing a ruined country. Post-civil war Spain, like post-war Poland, appears to me to be marked by the priority given to work and the daily round of living over *all* questions of principle. Lastly, let us not forget that any régime which has endured for some time can count on the support, not just of a few vested interests, but of a whole host of petty functionaries who have cause to fear any change. There is in Spain a vast and proliferating bureaucracy at the syndicalist and quasi-governmental levels. I was told in Madrid that the Director of Social Insurance had proudly informed a foreign visitor: "I have forty thousand functionaries working under my direction, and do you know how many I would need if the work were properly organised? At most three hundred." I don't guarantee the truth of the story, but it accords with the prevailing atmosphere. And there is at any rate no doubt that the unfinished buildings intended to house new Ministries in Madrid, which greet the eye of the departing visitor on the northern route, are the biggest in Europe, if not in the entire world.

A Fragile Régime

FRANCO is sustained by the past, and there is something precarious about this dependence on established interests on the one hand, and traumatic memories on the other. The overpowering impression carried away by the traveller in Spain is one of mingled boredom, oppression, and corruption. A whole new generation has grown up for whom the civil war is only a shadow in the background, while daily vexations are ever present. Thus it is not by accident that, seventeen years after the close of the civil

war, a *malaise* begins to find more open expression, and a new opposition element is added to the older ones.

This element consists of the sons of Falangist leaders and other "profiteers of the régime." It is typical of this cleavage between the generations that the son of Spain's Foreign Minister, Martin Artajo—a former Christian-Democrat who became a Franco supporter—has become a Protestant convert (and consequently ineligible for the more attractive careers); the son of the Air Minister declined a chance to obtain a law professorship, on the grounds that he did not wish to teach law under a régime contemptuous of legality. Among those arrested last February there was the young scientist Miguel Sanchez Mazas, the son of the Falangist writer and leader Rafael Sanchez Mazas. This judgment pronounced upon the *status quo* by the privileged student élite marks the Franco government as an "*ancien régime*," and its Falangist décor as a façade which no longer deceives the Falangists themselves.

Every conflict of generations, every youth movement, proceeds from a two-fold motivation: a spirit of adventurous revolt against stagnation and oppression, allied to the legitimate ambition to find a field of action, an opportunity for useful work, and for asserting oneself against those who have monopolised all places and preferments. A non-democratic régime which finds an outlet for such practical ambitions, while frustrating the desire for liberty, can no doubt hold out very long. A régime which satisfies neither moral aspirations nor practical ambitions, lays the groundwork for an irremediable crisis. And this is precisely the position of the ageing Franco régime in its relationship to the new generation. It is futile to speculate on the number of years it may still be able to hold out, but it is just as futile to suppose that the fundamental trouble can be dealt with by imprisoning a few hundred "agitators."

The War of the Spanish Succession

THE fact of the matter is that no one in Spain is concerned with the future pros-

pects of the régime; the sole topic of discussion is the eventual succession.

Is it to be the Monarchy? The "pure" Falangists, i.e. the hard-core ones, as well as some of the more "impure" who have managed to hold on to their jobs, detest this solution. Arrese, the new Falangist secretary, has demanded that the Falangist succession itself be legally guaranteed. Falangism may be only a matter of décor for the mass of Spaniards, but for the Falangist "cadres" and the militia it remains a means of existence; to a good many sons of the impoverished lower-middle class, the Falangist militia offers material advantages, an illusion of power, and the chance to "be someone." Hence the *mélange* of traditionalism and revolutionism in the make-up of this "radical" movement that would like to preserve its status, and which still has a good deal more influence in the provinces than in the great cities, where it is discredited and where no one bothers to sport its insignia.

Some Falangists likewise fear that a Monarchical restoration would make nonsense of their syndicalism and their social-revolutionary rhetoric. Significantly, Franco has repeatedly tried to reassure the Falange on this point. In an interview granted to Arrese on January 23rd, 1955, he had to deal with some questions which were as remarkable as the answers he gave: "Can you reassure our readers that an eventual restoration of the Monarchy would in no way affect the ideals of our national revolution, or the achievements and the institutions of the Movement?" Answer: "You can give your readers the most categorical assurance on this point. I have already said that the National Movement itself will assure its continuity. There can be no doubt on this subject." Yet uneasiness continued to persist, and three months later, on April 18th, a talk given by the Italian monarchist Cantalupo in the exclusive Ateneo club was interrupted by Falangist cries of "Down with the king."

The anti-Franco liberals, and even some of the socialists and anarchists, are prepared to accept a Monarchical restoration, on condition that it brings with it the return of

certain liberties. The Royal family has, however, taken no occasion to appear as an independent political factor, and the acceptance by certain of its members of a pension paid to them by Franco has hurt their standing even among traditional Monarchists. The Monarchy as a simple continuation of the Franco government has no appeal for anyone. At present Franco's régime bears a marked resemblance to the dull oppression of Ferdinand VII at the time of the Holy Alliance, and Spain does not wish to live permanently under Ferdinand VII.

Communism—A Danger or a Pretext?

CAN one conceive a Communist succession passing through various transitional stages, including a Popular Front? This spectre constantly is evoked by the official press, notably in the articles written or inspired by Luis Apparicio, the propaganda chief; it is employed to discredit liberal tendencies, or to justify the saving mission of Franco—that last bulwark of a Christendom imperilled by the liberal road to Bolshevism and perdition.

There is today in Spain no significant organised Communist movement. True, the Communists are actively trying to infiltrate the underground opposition movements and the official Falangist unions, and are willing to espouse liberal or Falangist demands without any trace of "sectarianism." There was at least one Communist in the liberal group which organised the Congress of Young University Writers. But that movement was not due to Communist influence, nor did the Communists infiltrate it. They simply attach themselves to anything that offers them an opportunity to gain a hearing. One must not underrate the effect of the prolonged political "diseducation" of the young under a régime which bars any discussion of political ideas. The effect is not confined to the large proportion of the student youth who conform to the image of Italy's "*vitelloni*"—bored and apathetic young people who take no interest in anything beyond the sports page of the daily paper. It also makes itself felt in the liberal movements, with their frequently

utopian demands (e.g. the proposal that “unsatisfactory” university teachers be dismissed after two years). How should this youth, which has never experienced any form of democracy, display a sudden maturity and make its first halting steps towards liberty in a wise and prudent manner? If there is a danger of Communist infiltration—and I believe it will grow—the fault lies, not with the régime’s eternal scapegoat, “liberalism,” but with the Franco government itself. Communism is in fact opposed to the liberty to which the youth of Spain aspires, but what they are told by the spokesmen of the régime is calculated to give them a very different impression.

There has recently appeared a bulky pamphlet signed by one Mauricio Carllaville and bearing the title—in flaming letters on a black cover—*Sodomites*. The author sets out to demonstrate that Communism is synonymous with pederasty, and to this end investigates the “sexual perversions” of Robespierre, Azaña, and Martínez Barrios—an 18th century Jacobin, and two modern Presidents of the Spanish Republic! Pornography of this sort is not hampered by an otherwise rigorous censorship. Or consider a recent series of articles in *El Español*, denouncing Communist influence among the students, wherein the author warms to his theme by listing the following forbidden works found in the homes of some young people: Arthur Koestler’s *Spanish Testament*, Poems by Rafael Alberti and Pablo Neruda, some pamphlets issued by the European Youth Movement and the Liberal youth supporters of the European Community, and finally a brochure published by the Council of Europe and “printed in Strasbourg” (an aggravating circumstance this?). To confront young people avid for serious information with such a tissue of nonsensical rubbish is to make them feel that anti-Communism is synonymous with mediocrity and stupidity, and that Communism must consequently stand for the opposite qualities. Communism is thus rendered interesting and attractive—no small achievement considering the experiences of the civil war period!

The Church

IF FRANCO were to yield his power, and if some kind of appeal were made to the voters, it is improbable that the new intellectual élite would find itself backed by the electorate. During the early stage at any rate, the conservative forces would stand the best chance of preserving their cohesion and gaining support. The best organised of these forces under the present régime is clearly the Catholic Church.

But does this Church, which has so much influence under and over the régime, really hold the key to the soul of the Spanish people? No clear-cut reply is possible. For a large section of the opposition, notably in Catalonia, the Church has ceased to count. It is said to have missed every opportunity of rising above the battle and dissociating itself from the régime. And one may also note the opinion of the Archbishop of Valencia who estimates that “three-quarters of the workers have no religion whatever.”

If there are indications of a process of de-Christianisation among the masses, there is even clearer evidence of a certain aversion felt by the intellectual élite for the Church, and more particularly for the confusion of the temporal and spiritual powers. Where is one to look for a leading Spanish thinker or writer who can be described as orthodox? In the seminaries, theses on Ortega and Unamuno are not accepted, and may even constitute ground for expulsion. Then, too, the thousands of conversions to Protestantism among the young—the precise figure is unknown, but it is rumoured to be around thirty thousand—is an interesting symptom, recalling as it does the attraction which “heresy” had for Italian intellectuals at the time of the Counter-Reformation. Reference has been made to the son of that ultra-Catholic pillar of the régime, Martín Artajo. One must bear in mind that, in Spain, Protestantism is barely tolerated, and that conversion may be tantamount to virtual exclusion from any sort of career, and even to termination of one’s studies. Yet there have been cases of conversion even in the villages where—in the absence of any understanding

of what Protestantism signifies—the bare idea of “protest” evokes a response. These conversions represent an extraordinary phenomenon, and the Church not surprisingly is worried.

What of the Church itself? The Spanish anti-clericals tend to regard it as a monolithic bloc, a rigidly organised political force within which, moreover, a carefully elaborated strategy allots different rôles to various tendencies. Yet Spanish Catholicism, like Spanish society as a whole, exhibits a certain spiritual ferment, signs of renewal, a new way of looking at modern problems. The former Rector of Madrid University himself belonged to this more open-minded school of Catholicism, as does the philosopher Julian Marias, and that remarkable writer J. L. Aranguren who—despite the covert opposition of the Opus Dei—has been appointed Professor of Ethics at Madrid University. (Opus Dei may be described as “free-masonry” of the radically “integrist” Spanish Catholics; it stands in opposition to Pax Romana, the international movement which, after the war, did so much to help Spain get out of her isolation.)

There is always something unsatisfactory about “structural” analyses which make no allowance for personalities, circumstantial details, and other imponderables. In Spain at any rate personalities and temperaments count for something. Cardinal Segura, for example, owed his rise to the part he played in the divorce of Alfonso XIII, which no other bishop was at that time prepared to accept. His quarrel with Franco probably goes back to a dinner at which the prelate objected to the precedence given to the Caudillo’s wife. There are ardently Falangist bishops, and some who think the régime too liberal. There are others who are shocked by the prevalent social conditions and inclined to take up a mildly reformist attitude, e.g. the bishop of Malaga. Lastly, there are those like the bishop of Pamplona, Mgr. Delgado, who wrote the preface to a book issued under his auspices—a book that is difficult to obtain: I searched Madrid in vain for a copy, and finally located one by accident

in a stationer’s shop in Córdoba. It is called *Why Are We Poor?* and its author is a woman teacher, Manuela Gallardo y Gomez. Having presented this study to a symposium organised by the Ministry of Education on the causes of illiteracy, she saw it rejected as “being without any interest.” The book is a meticulous comparison of the educational systems of Spain, Holland, Norway, and Germany, and arrives at the conclusion that the cause of the widespread illiteracy in Spain is the failure of the authorities to combat it. It also maintains that the atrocities committed during the civil war were the responsibility of a privileged class which did nothing to free the people from their ignorance and barbarism. “The ignorant masses represented a charge of dynamite which we had all accumulated.”

Army and Falange

THE succession to Franco is a matter that depends on the outcome of a tug-of-war



between forces more or less openly organised under a régime which is not the sole fount of authority. In the current idiom, the régime represents "the four S's"—sabre, soutane, syndicates, and *sinvergüenza* (shamelessness, i.e. corruption). Of the four, the sabre is now the most important. For the past eleven years, there has been a quiet shift from revolutionary Falangism to conservative militarism, a shift not affected by the recent appointment of "radical" Falangists like Arrese to certain leading positions. The current unrest may even precipitate a movement in the direction of military dictatorship pure and simple.

A witness of the recent clashes between students and Falangist militiamen described to me how he took shelter, with his fiancée, in a nearby café, where everyone was greatly excited by what was happening—save for a group of officers who did not pay the slightest attention: Falangists or liberals, these distinctions evidently mattered little to them. They were clearly conscious of being the true possessors of authority. The Falangists are aware of it, too. The not very numerous blue-shirted militiamen who move about with the air of an army of occupation amidst a hostile population are not the masters of the State, and Franco does not depend on them to anything like the extent to which he depends on the Army—with which indeed he identifies himself. He appears in his general's uniform, and not in Falangist dress, even on the occasion of an anniversary reception arranged by the Falange. By now he seems to regard the Falange as nothing more than an auxiliary bureaucracy. When at a recent meeting of

the Falangist Council some of those present tried to bring up political topics, the Caudillo cut them short, told them to present a report on their activities, briefly outlined their tasks for the coming year, and promptly left the meeting. Franco is himself a military man before everything else, and his *pronunciamento* in 1936 was something different from—and a great deal more traditional than—the Falangist idea, now represented symbolically by a man long dead: José Antonio Primo de Rivera.

But will the Army not be shaken and demoralised by the inevitable loss of Spanish Morocco? One knows what Morocco has

meant to the tradition of this Army, to Franco's own career, and finally in the civil war: a military colony inhabited by at least 25,000 officers; the final vestige of Spain's once world-wide empire; a bastion unshaken by movements of opinion on the mainland—Morocco by a thousand threads is closely linked to the prestige of the régime and for the Army its loss is especially painful.



How will this affect its political attitude? Most of the higher grades are fairly well content with their military privileges. They cannot envisage a régime more favourable to them and have no interest whatever in political adventures. Yet the Army may wish to compensate itself for the loss of prestige inherent in the retreat from Morocco by a visible and sensible reinforcement of its official position in the State. Thus both the intellectual ferment which does not touch it, and the Moroccan negotiations which touch it very closely, seem to conspire to emphasise the military character of the Franco régime.

Herbert Luthy

“Of Poor Bert Brecht”

*Von diesen Städten wird bleiben, der
durch sie hindurch ging, der Wind. . . .
Wir wissen, dass wir Vorläufige sind
Und nach uns wird kommen: nichts
Nennenswertes.*

*Bei den Erdbeben, die kommen werden,
werde ich hoffentlich
Meine Virginia nicht ausgehen lassen
durch Bitterkeit,
Ich, Bertolt Brecht. . . .
("Vom armen B. B.")*

Of these cities will be left: the wind that
went through them. . . .
We know that we are forerunners
And that after us will come: nothing
worth mentioning.

In the earthquakes to come, I will, I hope,
Not let my cheroot go out through bitter-
ness,
I, Bertolt Brecht. . . .
("Of Poor B. B.")

THE discovery or rediscovery of Bertolt Brecht that is now taking place in the countries of the West has the same ambiguity that has characterised most of the artistic novelties of the last two generations. The new is not so new as it looks or claims to be; yesterday's standards are never surpassed or discarded without a return to those of the day before yesterday. It is surely no accident that archæology and anthropology have become two of the richest

sources for the æsthetic and intellectual movements of our era. We draw new life out of old graves, and not only out of old ones, but from fresh ones too—even out of the kind the Bible refers to as "whited sepulchres."

One of these buried civilisations that is

Curriculum Vitæ

Berthold Brecht (in his unorthodox period: Bert Brecht; now: Bertolt Brecht).

Born in Augsburg, 1898 (his father owned a paper mill in Augsburg).

Studied medicine; was mobilised with the sanitation corps in World War One.

First works: "Baal," 1920 (published 1922); "Trommeln in der Nacht," 1922, for which he got the Kleist-Preis; "Im Dickicht der Städte," 1924; "Mann ist Mann," 1927; "Die Hauspostille" (Poetry), 1927; "Dreigroschenoper," 1928.

Was Dramaturg at the Münchner Kammerspiele. Discovered Marxism 1927. Didactic plays (Lehrstücke) 1928-33.

Exile 1933: Denmark, Sweden, Finland, California (lived in Santa Monica 1942-7), Zürich 1947-9; Berlin (East) 1949, first as director of the Deutsches Theater, now Supervisor of the Theater am Schiffsbauerdamm.

now being recovered is the short span of German history from 1918 to 1933 which we might, peering backwards, call "the Weimar culture." It was a time of fermentation and upheaval, filled to the bursting-point with cosmopolitanism, modernism, and radical experimentation in every field of art and literature. In its short life between two catastrophes, it had already invented and explored almost everything—down to details of tone and manner—that was reinvented and brought into fashion in Western Europe after the Second World War, not only in Western Germany, but even more—and to an almost alarming degree—in France, where existentialism, Kafka, Marxian exegesis, and "the decline of the West" combined to produce a mixture of near-Weimarian *Weltschmerz*. The vogue of Bertolt Brecht, whose "didactic plays" no longer bob up for a moment in little avant-garde theatres but who has become the playwright, and above all, the house-ideologist, of the *Théâtre National Populaire* in France, and who passes for a dramatic oracle in the world of the "progressive" theatre in London and New York, is a product of this archæological revolution.

Such cultural borrowings never take place without misunderstanding. The grossest of these misunderstandings is also the commonest. Brecht lives and directs in East Berlin; he and his troupe appear at international theatre festivals as representatives of the "peoples' democracies," and his work is often presented as good tidings from the East. For the intellectuals of France, as well as other countries, Brecht is a living confirmation of that æsthetic-ideological formula which equates artistic radicalism, the political Left, and the geographical East.

Now it is true that Bertolt Brecht has lived in East Berlin for the last seven years, as a privileged intellectual with a dramatic laboratory, his own troupe of actors, and all the technical assistance he needs. But since he settled in East Germany, Brecht has not published a single line that will take its place in his literary work. He has tied little ideological flags (like the "Prelude in Colchos"

artificially tacked on to the "Caucasian Chalk Circle") to his old plays, or added a "popular democratic" variation (like the "will to self-defence" with which the uncompromising pacifism of the "Trial of Lucullus" was softened for its presentation in East Berlin). He has turned out some propaganda verse on the literary level of an advertisement for hair restorer, written to order and without enthusiasm; and he has sometimes set his signature to manifestos. But otherwise he has written nothing. All his creative work was done in the West, the most important of it in pre-1933 Germany, the later portions in Denmark, France, America, Switzerland. Today, Brecht is still produced and published in West Germany, in France, England, and America—but nowhere in the whole zone of Communist domination, with the single exception of the privileged "show-window" that is Berlin, is a single play of Brecht's ever presented. And even in Berlin, his own troupe's repertory is limited to a handful of his plays presented in more or less "revised" versions.*

Brecht and the Baroque

EVERYTHING essential in Brecht belongs to the buried "Weimar culture." But from there the roots of his work lead further back, towards another almost totally buried and forgotten age of catastrophe, which was, however, one of the greatest ages of German literature—the baroque.

The German baroque theatre, one of the most eccentric and recusant of all forms of Western theatre, was not drama and not tragedy, but *Trauerspiel* (literally, a "sorrow play"), whose whole content was a passionate

* Brecht's own personal relation to the West has survived his move to East Berlin. The subsidies for his work that he receives from the East German Government are paid into his Swiss bank account in dollars—as was the Stalin prize he won in 1954. Even the ideologically "purified" East German versions of his works appear in editions authorised by a West German publishing firm and are paid for in hard Western currency into the same bank account. The way back has been kept open.

lamentation for the misery of man and the futility of his works; it was filled with horrors and atrocities, mass-murders and physical torture, death and decomposition. It was really an "epic" theatre that put historical events on the stage almost without dramatic articulation, because history itself seemed to it a single endless "sorrow play," and it was a thoroughly political theatre that presented large and bloody events: war, tyranny, assassination, and rebellion. In its greatest works it was already a monstrous puppet show, whose declaiming heroes danced helplessly on the strings of their lust for power and glory, a lust often heightened to the point of clinical insanity. No individual motivation existed in it, nor indeed any plot, but only the arbitrary manipulation of political intrigues, and it had no characters, only representative types—or rather, figures in an always identical allegory of power, *hybris*, and disaster. To be sure, it would be ridiculous to force the parallel between a literature which was created by court officials and clerics amid the theocratic absolutism of the Counter-Reformation and one created by radical intellectuals in the nihilistic "asphalt" mood of the Weimar Republic—although this nihilism always showed a sinister tendency to turn into Byzantinism and theocracy. No direct and recognisable road leads from the baroque *Trauerspiel* to Brecht's "epic" theatre. German baroque drama has been unactable and unreadable since the early 18th century; its form, its tradition, and the spiritual world that produced it had long ago become incomprehensible, except as they survived in the grotesque caricature of the puppet theatre. But as Walter Benjamin, one of the most perceptive of German critics, has noted, there does exist a half-overgrown "smuggler's path by which the heritage of the medieval and baroque drama has reached us. This path, wild and overgrown as it may be, is visible today in Brecht's dramas."

It is through the baroque lyric, whose verbal extravagance and proliferating metaphors were rediscovered by German Expressionism as the sharpest antithesis to

classicism, that the main connecting thread leads. The line of descent is quite evident in the almost pathological relation of Brecht's lyrics to the German church song, the only part of the baroque inheritance that has remained alive. Brecht has never been able to keep from blasphemously parodying German hymns, sometimes with the vulgarity of an angry street urchin, but often with a real, almost childlike inconsolability for the lost faith of childhood. "There is no return. . . . You die with all the animals, and nothing comes afterwards"—and the tone and language of the chorale have remained characteristics of his poetry. The title of his first and most important book of poems, on whose wealth he still heavily draws, is *Die Hauspostille*—"The Book of Prayers"—and this title rightly characterises the tone of even his most dissolute and blasphemous poems (a Catholic critic has called it "the Devil's prayer-book").

But the really baroque characteristic of this poetry is the constant, all-pervasive presence of physical death and decomposition, a genuine obsession that sometimes unexpectedly transforms itself into a wild, vegetative greed for life. It is only in this death-haunted greed for life that Brecht's brilliant first play, *Baal*—that unactable closet drama which was nevertheless acted in the Vienna of the inflation and the "great nausea"—distinguishes itself from other excesses of that first post-war period, but in this it lifts itself head and shoulders above them all. A drunken Bacchanalia, wild and formless, magnificent and swinish, fervent and lustful, full of swelling, rape, and homicide, but also full of superb Villonesque ballads, most of which later found their way—reworked, reshaped, and tidied-up—into *Hauspostille*, it contains many of the elements of a romantically exaggerated self-portrait as well as many elements of a sadistic day-dream. Baal, the "degenerate god" with the guitar, poet, rake, and wandering scholar, "soaked in brandy or in poetry," playing, singing, bawling, naked between earth and heaven, rooting among women, forests, and the naked earth—"Why can one

not sleep with the plants?"—full of greed and the "fear and blindness of creatures," finally dies "like a beast in the undergrowth," alone and resigned like an animal. But dying, he creeps out of the abandoned hut into the clear night, under the stars—"It was very beautiful . . . everything."

The Greed for Life

WHETHER wants a sample of "Western decadence" can reach happily for *Baal* and *Hauspostille*. Here is everything he could wish for in the way of mockery of religion, of humanity, of simple morality. The great all-pervading theme of all these songs, ballads, and chorales is corruption itself, decomposition in all its forms, mould, mildew, urine, excrement, scurf, scabs, and caries, stagnant pools, carrion, rotting wrecks—and the whole flora and fauna of decay: seaweed, moss and swamp vegetation, worms, maggots, rats, hyenas, vultures, and sharks. There are hardly two or three out of these fifty poems of *Hauspostille* in which something is not rotting, whether it be bread, garbage, or a corpse in the closet; and the dank, shimmering palette of decomposition colours them all—through rotting walls, seawater and black rain consumed landscapes, ships, and men; the fruit of the womb falls red and naked out of the mother; teeth and grimaces fall out of black jaws; a pair of lovers, soaked and enflamed—"rained through by love like a wrecked ship"—couple between decaying sheets "like a half-drowned meadow"; and the two inseparable comrades of the "Ballad of Friendship" push up the yellow river "like two pumpkins swimming upstream, rotten, but on one stem," united even to death, and hanging "softly, like rancid dates, in each other's mouths." All seasons, times, and processes, the streaming of rain and the wild growth of forests, birth, copulation, and death, are depicted in a rhetoric of decomposition whose macabre delicacy permeates all the pores of this poetry and gives it its unmistakable tone.

And yet all this is not morbid at all. Under a thin protective layer of wild posturing, it

is really careless, joyous, and with genuine spiritual depth. What is presented here in the language of decomposition is the life-process itself, the great, orgiastic metamorphosis of nature.

*Lobet den Baum, der aus Aas aufwächst
jauchzend zum Himmell*

Lobet das Aas,

Lobet den Baum, der es frass,

Aber auch lobet den Himmel.

(*Grosser Dankchoral*)

Praise the tree that grows out of carrion,
exulting to heaven!

Praise the carrion,

Praise the tree that devoured it,

But praise heaven too!

("Great Thanksgiving Chorale")*

It is a wholly vegetative sense of life, passive and thankful and full of a sense of brotherhood with plants and animals and everything transitory, a bitter and contented, a despairing and sensual drifting on the stream of being. The drowned corpse, that almost obsessively recurring hallucination of Brecht's poetry, and its poetic transposition, the wrecked ship slowly dissolving into nothingness, are images not of death but of life; or, rather, the difference between the two is obliterated in the image of the living corpse that moves in endless transformations through these poems and through Brecht's early dramatic works. All life is a process of dying from the beginning, and between life and death there is only a difference of degree. His ballads overflow with ever-changing variations, often raised to a pitch of moving intensity, on this theme of life as a purely biological phenomenon, as a phase in the transmutation of nature. With serene acquiescence, in the section of *Hauspostille* he calls "Exercises," he teaches that: one should "lie in streams and ponds like the weeds in which the pike nest," not move a muscle when "the fish swim through us," "let oneself drift," "not swim, no, only act as if one were a part of the flotsam . . . as if a woman were carry-

* In this article, the translations of Brecht's poetry do not attempt to go beyond a literal rendering.—Ed.

ing you, and that was how it should be.” The swimmer borne by water, whether corpse, wrecked ship, or living man, is also the unborn child in its mother’s womb. All these images of pure, passive being coalesce in the end, and they finally fuse into the melancholy self-portrait of Bert Brecht, of “poor B. B.” whose mother brought him “out of the black forests into the cities” while he “lay in her womb.” Slow dissolving wrecks, passive drifting in water, the plant-like pre-existence of a child in the womb, decomposition in graves and seas and forests, these are interchangeable symbols of a security which is lost only in the brief, transitory span between birth and death:

*Warum seid ihr nicht im Schoss eurer Mütter
geblieben
Wo es stille war und man schlief und man
war da?*

(Why did you not stay in your mother’s womb
Where it was quiet and one slept and one was
there?)

—and it is important only to live out this span indifferently, without anxiety or rancour, “lazy and in the end content.”

The provocative blasphemies and cynicisms are mere “time-bound” embroidery on this at once joyful and despairing vegetative sense of life—an irrepressible reflex of the era of *Weltschmerz* and complaint in which Brecht wrote. The best of these poems, and above all the ballads, some of which are among the most beautiful ever written in the German language, are relatively free of this element. The Brecht of *Baal* and *Hauspostille* is no nay-sayer. His poetry has a curious, quite this-worldly piety hidden at its core—he calls Baal “pious” and the word is not a sarcasm. It is the piety of an uncomplaining acceptance of the natural world because it is natural, of a sense of unity with all the creatures in their lostness. The “*Choral vom Manne Baal*” (“Chorale of the Man Baal”), which Brecht himself set simply and beautifully to music, and sang to a banjo, is no parody of a church hymn:

Als im weissen Mutterschosse aufwuchs Baal,

*War der Himmel schon so gross und still und
fahl*

*Jung und nackt un ungeheuer wundersam
Wie ihn Baal dann liebte, als Baal kam.*

*Und der Himmel blieb in Lust und Kummer
da,*

*Auch wenn Baal schlief, selig war und ihm
nicht sah . . .*

*. . . Nur der Himmel, aber immer Himmel
Deckte mächtig seine Blösse zu.*

*Und wenn Baal der dunkle Schoss hinunter-
zieht:*

Was ist Welt für Baal noch? Baal ist satt.

Soviel Himmel hat Baal unterm Lid,

Dass er tot noch grad gnug Himmel hat.

(When Baal was growing in the white maternal womb/ The sky was already as great and still and pale/ Young and naked and hugely wonderful/ As Baal loved it later, when Baal came// And the sky remained, through joy and trouble,/ Even when Baal slept, knew bliss, and did not see it . . ./ Only the sky, but still always the sky/ Made a mighty cover for his nakedness// And if Baal draws the dark womb over him:/ What is the world for Baal still? Baal has enough./ Baal has so much sky under his lid/ That even dead he still has sky enough.)

The great natural world of these poems of Brecht is never a human habitation, a landscape, with its limitedness and security; it is sea, sky, primeval forest, an immensity in which everything is lost and dissolved—the boundless, all-embracing element others call God, the world, or the universe, out of which every man comes and to which every man returns. This acceptance of existence is expressed with childlike piety and docility in the movingly simple “*Ballade von der Freundlichkeit der Welt*” (“Ballad of the Friendliness of the World”), perhaps Brecht’s finest poem, in which all the tumult dies away:

*Auf die Erde voller kaltem Wind
Kamt ihr alle als ein nacktes Kind
Frierend lagt ihr ohne alle Hab
Als ein Weib euch eine Windel gab.*

*Keiner schrie euch, ihr wart nicht begehrt
Und man holte euch nicht im Gefährt.*

Hier auf Erden wart ihr unbekannt

Als ein Mann euch einst nahm an der Hand.

*Und die Welt, die ist euch gar nichts schuld:
Keiner hält euch, wenn ihr gehen wollt.
Vielen, Kinder, wart ihr vielleicht gleich.
Viele aber weinten über euch.*

*Von der Erde voller kaltem Wind
Geht ihr all bedeckt mit Schorf und Grind.
Fast ein jeder hat die Welt geliebt
Wenn man ihm zwei Hände Erde gibt.*

(To the earth, full of cold wind/ You came,
each of you, as a naked child/ You lay freez-
ing, owning nothing/ When a woman gave
you swaddling clothes// No one called for
you, you were not coveted/ And you were not
brought in carriages/ Here on earth you were
unknown/ When a man once took you by the
hand.// And the world, it owes you nothing
at all/ No one holds you if you wish to go./
Many, children, were perhaps indifferent to
you/ But a few were crying over you.// From
the earth, full of cold wind/ All of you go
covered with scurf and scabs/ Almost every-
one has loved the world/ When they give him
two handfuls of earth.)

The Shadow Play

OF SOCIAL criticism, in even the most distant sense, there is no hint in all this. A great loneliness reigns in Brecht's poems, as in his plays, and in his life—the life of a great shut-in, who “cannot get out of himself” and for just that reason yearns after the collective. But this loneliness is not socially conditioned, it is existential. All contact is only illusion, deception, and disappointment—sweet illusion, perhaps—and for that reason the important thing is to retain the moment in its full intensity, and forget the human being who passes on and is already a stranger in the next instant. There is only one love poem in all Brecht's work that is not ironic, the poem entitled “*Erinnerung an die Marie A.*” (“Remembrance of Marie A.”), very beautiful and delicate in its perfect tact—yet it is no remembrance of a woman, of a human face, but of the fleeting summer cloud that passed and dissolved over the lovers:

*. . . Und fragst du mich, was mit der Liebe
sei?*

*So sag ich dir: Ich kann mich nicht erin-
nern. . . .*

*Doch ihr Gesicht, dass weiss ich wirklich
nimmer*

Ich weiss nur mehr: Ich küsste es dereinst.

*Und auch den Kuss, ich hätt ihn längst ver-
gessen*

Wenn nicht die Wolke da gewesen wär

*Die weiss ich noch und werd' ich nimmer
wissen*

Sie war sehr weiss und kam von oben her.

(And if you ask what happened to my love/
I'll tell you: I can't remember . . . / Her face
I really know no more/ I only know now that
I kissed it once.// And even the kiss I would
have long forgotten/ If this cloud had not
been there/ I know that cloud still and will
always know it/ It was very white and came
down from above.)

The human being remains unknown. But in the Brecht of *Hauspostille* he is still present. In contrast to Brecht's later “activist” period, when the human being is reduced to his social function and his social relationships, the poet Brecht is still aware of the “secrets of every man” that nobody knows. There is no bridge over the loneliness between man and man. This is the theme of Brecht's last Expressionist play, *Im Dickicht Der Städte* (“In the City Jungle”) (1927), which represents “the metaphysical struggle of two men in the metropolis of Chicago”; the despairing, violent attempt to break through this loneliness—which neither love nor friendship can alter—with the aid of the passion of enmity. The last dialogue between the two protagonists, who have tracked each other down in the swamp beside Lake Michigan, seals the failure of this attempt:

Shlink: The infinite isolation of man makes enmity an unattainable goal. But no communication is possible with animals either.

Garga: Language is not enough for communication.

Shlink: I have watched the animals. Love, the warmth of bodily nearness, is our only comfort in the dark. But the union of bodies does not bridge the gap in language. And yet we come together to create beings who will stand beside us in our hopeless isolation. And the generations look coldly into each other's eyes. If you stuffed a ship to

bursting point with human bodies, there would be such loneliness in it that they would all freeze. Are you listening, Garga? Yes, the loneliness is so great that not even a struggle is possible.

All these early plays of Brecht are—like the later ones, but in a realer and deeper sense—mask and shadow plays. The most finished of them dramatically, *Mann Ist Mann* (“Man Is Man”), is the comedy of “the transformation of the stevedore Galy Gay in the military barracks of Kilkoa in the year 1925.” Its subject is “the infinite interchangeability of human beings”—the guileless Irish dockworker Galy Gay, who goes out unsuspectingly to buy fish for lunch, is kidnapped on the way by some soldiers of the Indian Army because one of their comrades has disappeared, and is transformed before our eyes (after the preliminary shooting of his insignificant old self) into a substitute soldier fit to be shoved into line at the next inspection. This was the first play that Brecht himself produced in the strict mask-theatre style. It is a marionette-like style, without expression, mimicry, or individual faces, in which action is presented as an anonymous “happening.” This mask-style, which is half joke and half deeper meaning, makes the transformation of Galy Gay a mere change of masks, giving it the effect of ultimate unimportance and even naturalness—Galy Gay’s exchange of identities is as much a mere matter of form as the apparent execution of his old self. And Galy Gay is by no means presented as a pitiable victim; he is not the “mass-age man,” the proletarian reduced to the status of an interchangeable cog in the machine, but rather the wise man who accepts these events passively and pliantly, as Brecht’s “Exercises” advise.

If social criticism were to be found anywhere in Brecht’s early work, it would be in *Trommeln in der Nacht* (“Drums in the Night”), the drama of the German soldier’s home-coming after the collapse of 1918. Here is the whole despair of the defeat and the famine, here is the satire on the time-serving bourgeois, hastily shifting from the manufacture of gun-carriages to that of perambu-

lators, here are the profiteers and speculators of the Piccadilly Bar, while the Spartacus rising rumbles in the background. And here, above all, is the biting satire on war and military heroism, the “Legend of the Dead Soldier” whose premature death “hurt the Kaiser” and who is therefore declared fit for action by the medical commission and sent to die a hero’s death once more. Here, too, is the ironic and deliberate exaggeration of the old tear-jerker about the returning soldier who finds his bride in someone else’s arms. Even the interruption of the stage action for ironic comments—“It’s just the same old stuff!” “It’s all a fake!”—is already present, and at the Munich première there were signs on the wall saying “*Glottz nicht so romantisch*”—“Don’t gape so romantically.” It’s all a swindle, don’t let yourself be taken in—this was the nihilistic conclusion Brecht had drawn in 1918 (and not Brecht alone by any means), and which formed the not very promising background on which the Weimar Republic was born. The dead soldier has no intention of shouldering his rifle again for some other cause—certainly not for the revolutionary Spartacus Bund:

“My flesh is to rot in the gutter so that your idea can triumph? Are you drunk? . . . I’m a swine, and the swine is going home.”

Home with the bride made pregnant by the gun-carriage manufacturer—and thus at one blow the “dead soldier” destroys the whole elaborate construction of moonlight, idealism, and revolution. He puts his arm around the woman and they go home in the grey dawn—curtain. He, too, is one of Brecht’s cynical wise men, like Galy Gay and Baal and the swimmers in lakes and streams.

“New and Different”

THAT the mood and spirit of the times, that the whole stammering, lyrical ferment of the twenties can be heard in Brecht’s work does not distinguish him from the dozens of poets of that time who are today

forgotten. More important are the rich and various influences Brecht assimilated—sometimes, indeed, as he says in his sonnet on Villon, simply “lifting them out,” but more often reworking them into something genuinely his own. There was the influence of the *poètes damnés*, Villon, Rimbaud, and Baudelaire, of Wedekind and the street-ballad singers, of German folk poetry and the wandering scholars, of Luther’s Bible and the pietists. There was the Far East he got first through Kipling, Klabund, and Doebelin, and then later directly, and which supplied him not only with colours for his exotic palette but also wisdom for his ethic of passive suffering and passive enjoyment. There was the robust and heedless “Americanism” of the “roaring twenties,” whose jazz and machine rhythms pulsed through his work down to the first “didactic pieces” (*Lehrstücke*) and to which he even wrote some of the songs for the opera *Mahagonny* in an approximation of English. All these chaotic and at first wildly clashing influences fused together in “the man Baal” to express a genuinely individual personality.

What is central, is the root experience of loneliness, of a lost, grublike evanescence, which is at the base of his poetry. Even though it is turned towards a kind of vegetative affirmation, this original experience is that of the submergence of the individual in the purely material processes of the natural world. It is an experience that lies far below all philosophical, political, or sociological theorising.

From this point on, it is possible to measure the extent of the break that appears now in Brecht’s work. The indolent, vegetative vagrant with the guitar has become an agitator, the Expressionist ballad-singer an ascetic pedant. All Brecht’s lyric strength was abruptly buried under the weight of the revelation that the poet’s task is to “change the world” and “teach the people.” This revelation, although it has given him a threadbare doctrine, has endowed him with no vision. Never has Brecht been able to indicate by even the simplest poetic image or symbol what the world for which he is

agitating should really look like; all he can say is that it will be “new and different,” and these two bare, abstract, and hollow-sounding words he has repeated endlessly for twenty-nine years, without ever being able to add a third adjective. Even today, when he is sitting in the midst of this longed-for “newness,” he can define it only by the same stereotyped negations. What is clear is only that everything that went before is to be despised and destroyed, and that the poet’s function is to damn it and “change the world.” And if someone wonders “what will happen to their savings and their Sunday clothes after the revolution,” then Brecht “will not have much to say” to him (*Gleichnis des Buddha vom brennenden Haus*)—Marx long ago termed it foolish to try to imagine socialism concretely, since it could only be qualitatively different and therefore unimaginable for us, and so Brecht will not puzzle his head over it either.

Everything that was, is swept away. Nature has disappeared; its place in Brecht’s vocabulary has been taken by “reality,” which is social, and must be changed. Gone are vegetation and creatures and the great sky; their place is taken by History (History with a great H), which can be read in Marx, and is the history of class warfare. Gone are falling hair, rotting teeth, and the world of biological process; if there is any corruption and dissolution it is that of capitalist society, and if teeth still fall out it is because the bourgeoisie do not provide decent hygienic conditions. The thinking man emerges, and rejects what cannot withstand his intelligence, schooled by the classics of Marxism-Leninism—and first of all he rejects his own former lyricism. The lostness and isolation of man is the alienation of the worker from his product, and reflects the commodity character of bourgeois society. Brecht’s own piety and passivity toward the world was a petty bourgeois lack of class-consciousness which Brecht, “the son of well-to-do parents,” namely of an Augsburg factory director, “brought up in the habit of being served” but “a renegade from his class,” has wholly renounced.

... Unter dem Volk
*Stehe ich und erkläre,
 Wie sie betrügen, und sage voraus, was kommen wird, Denn ich
 Bin in ihre Pläne eingeweiht.
 Das Lateinisch ihrer bestochenen Pfaffen
 Übersetze ich Wort für Wort in die gewöhnlich Sprache, da
 Erweist es sich als Humbug. . . .*
 (Verjagt mit gutem Grund)

(I stand among the people and explain/ Their
 frauds, and predict what will happen, for I/
 Am initiated into their plans./ I translate the
 Latin of their bribed priests/ Word for word
 into ordinary speech, so that/ It reveals itself
 as humbug. . . .)
 ("Exiled With Good Reason")

With this didactic burden, poetry assumes a different function; it no longer shapes a subjective experience but formulates objective truths. And since these truths have been laid down once and for all in the classics of socialism, and do not have to be searched for, the function of poetry remains only to find effective propagandistic or pedagogical formulations for them. As Brecht says in his essay "On Unrhymed Poetry With Irregular Rhythms" (1951), the problem is the same, on different levels—depending on whether the poem is intended for public or private use—as that used by a newspaper vendor, the pitch-man at a fair, or the cheer-leader at a demonstration: to put a sentence into scannable form, into "choruses in which the text is simply shaped and disciplined." He himself writes like this often enough:

*Drum links, zwei, drei!
 Drum links, zwei, drei!
 Wo dein Platz, Genosse, ist!
 Reih dich ein in die Arbeitereinheitsfront,
 Weil du auch ein Arbeiter bist.*
 (Einheitsfrontlied)

(Then left, two, three,/ Then left, two, three/
 Comrade, to your place!/ Line up in the
 workers' united front/ For you are a worker
 too.)

("Song of the United Front")

In this way, it is true, any text can be made into a poem, in the sense that poems are

highly polished advertisements or political speeches. One cannot deny Brecht the trail-blazing distinction of having made the lyrical strength of Stalinist prose available to German literature. Perhaps lyrical is not the right word; it is the same strength that is present in any solemnly recited religious or liturgical text. The language of the new Brechtian poetry is not simply, as it seems at first sight, journalese; it is clerical journalese.

"The Black Disease"

POETRY-WRITING made easy, one might say. But Brecht does not make it easy for himself. His rôle is not to parrot the holy texts, but to teach them to others; and in doing this, he does lend them an individual, if strictly limited, tone and rhythm. Brecht's struggle to achieve this hieratic tone would be evident even if he had not mentioned it in so many "theoretical" observations. It bears a curious relationship, which is noteworthy not only as an artistic experiment but as the symptom of a spiritual attitude, to Ernst Jünger's efforts to achieve a technically precise prose that would be as clear as glass and as hard as steel. This is a very German phenomenon, a defensive reaction to the anarchic possibilities and frightening immediacies of the German language. So Brecht struggles, mortifying himself, against his own gift for the lyric and the sensuous, which is irreconcilable with the liturgical. Melody, symmetry, colour, and harmony, but above all the immediacy of expression, cannot be combined with the impersonality of his office. What he seeks is a style as hard, bare, and unadorned as possible. Even what is difficult, dull, and tiring in the ascetic service of a super-personal truth must be made perceptible. In German, any attempt to achieve a religious tone must inevitably reach back to Luther's Bible and the pietistic church hymn, and Brecht expressly takes this simplicity and the rough strength of Luther's language as his model ("On Unrhymed Poetry"). Sometimes he catches this tone, if only after long effort, even today; in any case it is always the one

he is seeking, as his preference for archaic Biblical constructions and innumerable turns of phrase testify.

This bare poetry is at its best in the concision and pithiness of a few epigrams, in a few profoundly malicious formulations of personal hate, and, on rare occasions, in that simplicity and artlessness of his "Ballad of the Friendliness of the World" which sometimes echoes even through his Party hymns—with the same half-deliberate and half-unconscious avoidance of big words and open emotion that often reminds us of a child who would like to be passionate and is afraid of being laughed at.

We will not here investigate the political reasons for Brecht's transformation from the priest of Baal into a monkish ascetic. Brecht the political man has little interest. Certainly he was always "left," ever since he came home from the war as a twenty-year-old; in 1918 he apparently even served for a few days on the Worker's and Soldier's Council of his native city, Augsburg—his first and last political office. But Brecht was an anarchist, as Baal was an anarchist, and as the Expressionist movement was a literary anarchism, with the erotic, the exotic, and the excessive as the means and content of his rebellion, hostile to order and morality. For Brecht the writer, what may well have been decisive in his conversion was the very need to "organise" his chaotic tumult, verbally and intellectually. It would certainly be false to mourn him as a writer who had sacrificed his creative energy to a cold, abstract, and mechanical discipline; it was just this discipline that attracted him—almost all his genuinely Communist plays, and above all *Die Massnahme* ("The Measure"), have as their subject not the goal, the ethos, and the content of Communism but only and obsessively its harsh, inhuman discipline, as an end in itself.

Anarchism and Expressionism had exhausted themselves with adolescence and the great inflation. To a certain extent the turn to Communism was a way back, out of aimless revolt, towards fixed values and standards. But naturally it could not be a return

to "bourgeois" standards and values; "revolutionary discipline" was the solution which least damaged the self-respect of this prodigal son of the bourgeoisie. It was especially attractive in those last years of the Weimar Republic, when the artistic avant-garde and the Communists seemed to be fighting a common battle. The new yearning for a sense of human solidarity—that "black disease of our planet," as Brecht still called it in *Im Dickicht der Städte*—the desire for orders and comradeship, was in the air. The change was general and affected every area of life, it reached from Piscator's mass stage to the brown flood of Nazism. The Red Front Fighters' Bund and the S.A. marched through the streets with the same step, in the same dashing leather jackets, singing different words to the same music, and waving almost identical banners. Here, too, Brecht's originality lay in the formal consistency with which he carried through his conversion, down to the suppression of his personality. It was a formal consistency, not a political one; personally, he always maintained a discreet distance from the cult in whose liturgy he sought his new inspiration; he seems never to have entered the Party whose divinity he sang; and when he went into exile he did not go to the promised land he had exalted. He was a monk more for the cowl's sake than the creed's; and for just that reason, perhaps, he was able, in *Die Massnahme*, to write the most significant, perhaps even the only, Bolshevik drama.

From the standpoint of Brecht's poetic personality, the total revolution in his style was hardly more than a change of masks and rôles. Whether he appears as Baal or the Party bard, there is really something of the eccentric village schoolmaster about Brecht. At bottom he is a lonely, shy, mistrustful, and "unconfiding" man who can speak of impersonal things with enthusiasm and eloquence, but of human, not to say personal matters only with the greatest difficulty and the most careful distancing irony. There is no way of knowing how much of Brecht's abandonment of lyric Expressionism was a flight from the all too personal themes of

“the self” or “the individual,” which even his early poetry had sought to escape through wild savannahs and untracked jungles, to the non-committal abstractions of “mankind,” “society,” or “objective reality.” Unfortunately, this “objective reality” is a cardboard abstraction, and on that diet Brecht’s poetic gift has died of hunger.

Non-Euclidean Drama

His dramatic work, which had until then lived by its poetry, was inevitably affected. The theory of the “new dramatic form,” of the “didactic piece,” which Brecht later transformed into the doctrine of “epic theatre,” is that the social function of the theatre in a revolutionary period is not to allow the audience to participate, through pity and terror, in the destiny of a model “hero,” but to reveal the defectiveness of society to the proletariat. The “alienation effect,” that is, the maintenance of a critical distance between the audience and the events portrayed on the stage, which it should not “participate in” but “judge,” is achieved by having the actor not “play” his rôle but “show” or “report” it, as if it were something interesting and external to himself—just as, in a graphic comparison of Brecht’s, the witnesses of an accident reconstruct it by mimicking the gestures and behaviour of the principals. This theatre, which “no longer appeals to the emotions but to critical thought,” has been presented by Brecht in endless theoretical commentaries as a revolutionary advance on the “Aristotelian theatre”—as if Western drama before Brecht had been Aristotelian, as if Brecht’s own early and now disowned Expressionist plays had suffered from Aristotelian principles!—and Brecht, without false modesty, has compared its revolutionary significance to the discovery of non-Euclidean geometry. Brecht has, as he says, eliminated the distance between audience and stage. But he has not thereby brought the stage to the audience; he has transformed it into a platform on which there stands now, instead of the acting “hero,” the lecturing “teacher.”

The theoretical commentaries Brecht has written for all his plays should not lead us astray; Brecht is a mystifier of genius who thoroughly delights to mislead. His best didactic piece, *Die Massnahme* (1931), is a tightly-knit and perfectly classic drama which contradicts all his theories. But “epic theatre” does have a great deal to do with the impersonality of the “activist” style. It is a theatre without people, made up of masks which are allegorical figures with labels.

In Brecht’s early poetry, as well as his Expressionist plays, the mask symbolised the unknowability of human beings and their alienation from each other. In this “activist” period the mask remains but its function has changed. The figures on the stage are now wholly transparent, because they have been emptied of individuality; all the motives for their actions are as visible as a marionette’s strings; their thought, which is wholly determined by their social existence, is without mystery; they themselves are fully aware of their thoughts and motives, and express them flatly and precisely. The “dissolving face” of Brecht’s early poems has become the facelessness of abstractions, and this facelessness has been made programmatic. Organic dissolution has now become the conscious, active extinction of individuality—the disciplined, class-conscious man *should* have no face. In Brecht’s *Lesebuch für Städtebewohner* (“Reader for City-Dwellers”), which dates from the transitional period, the obliteration of the face is still a piece of half-ironic advice:

*Zieh den Hut ins Gesicht . . .
Zeige, o zeige dein Gesicht nicht
Sondern
Verwisch die Spuren!*

(Draw your hat over your face . . . / Don’t,
O don’t show your face/ But/ Cover your
tracks!)

But in *Die Massnahme* this “extinction” has become a religious action, part of the heroic ritual of dedication to an order. The entire action of this apotheosis of the anonymous Party apparatus is carried out in the form of a hearing before the “Control Chorus,” the kangaroo court of the GPU. Four Commu-

nist agitators sent to China from Moscow, who, obeying their vows, have extinguished their faces, their wills, and their feelings in the service of the Party, "all of them without names or mothers, empty pages on which the Revolution writes its instructions," report to the "Control Chorus" on why they killed and buried the fifth, Chinese comrade who had led them. His crime was simple: he succumbed to human impulses, to pity, indignation, anger, and thereby endangered the Party. He succumbed to pity in trying to help the exhausted rice-barge coolies instead of contenting himself with inciting them; then to indignation by defending a worker who had been attacked by the police while distributing leaflets, instead of obeying instructions to avoid conflict with the police; and finally to anger when he refused to continue eating with the fat leader of the rice profiteers—with whom the Party wished to conclude a tactical alliance against the English—after the latter has expounded his views in the magnificent song: *Was ist eigentlich ein Mensch?* ("What is a Man, really?"):

*Ich weiss nicht was ein Mensch ist,
Ich kenne nur seinen Preis.*

(I don't know what a man is,/ I only know his price.)

The idealistic comrade had not understood that the Party, too, did not know what a man was, and did not care to know. And so he commits the last and deadliest crime of open deviation from the Party line. He refuses to transmit to the Chinese comrades the Party's order to call off the revolt, he tears off the mask, the symbol of his "facelessness" and his extinguished will, "and in the twilight we saw his naked face, open, human, and innocent." He had taken back his individuality. There is nothing left to do but liquidate this danger to the Party, and throw him into the lime-pit. He himself, a hopeless idealist but a true revolutionary, gave—as his murderers report to the Control Chorus—his consent:

Er sagte noch: im Interesse des Kommunismus,

*Einverstanden mit dem Vormarsch der proletarischen Massen aller Länder,
Ja sagend zur Revolutionierung der Welt . . .*
(He still said: in the interests of Communism/
And the advance of the proletarian masses of all countries,/ Saying yes to the revolutionising of the world . . .)

—five years before the Moscow trials! If ever a work of Brecht's deserved to be called prophetic, this is the one.

The Three Vows

THE vow of poverty—only of poetic poverty, to be sure, but for a poet that is important; the vow of chastity—with the same reservation, but now all lust of the flesh and of the senses is banned from Brecht's work; and finally the vow of obedience to the extinction of self. Of the three vows the third is the decisive one, the *sacrificium intellectus*. As, according to the doctrine of *Die Massnahme*, there is only *one* virtue for a Communist, namely to be a Communist, so there is only *one* crime worthy of death: to obey one's own conscience, to maintain one's own will, to do the right thing without being ordered to by the Party, for unless it has been ordered it cannot be the right thing. It was not the working-class movement, which had never interested him, nor revolutionary Communism, which he never knew, but the new Byzantium that attracted Brecht: the rigid, hierarchic Church-State founded on the infallibility of the leader—not the idea but the organisation as an end in itself, the naked power-structure as the magnificent frame and subject of a dark religious masque. Brecht's notes on the shrill, overpowering music written for *Die Massnahme* by Hanns Eisler underline the effort it embodies to create an ecclesiastical style in which the Party bureaucracy assumes the place of both Church and divinity. The music for the "extinction of the face," says this instructive commentary, "represents an attempt to constitute a transformation of social function as a heroic ceremony" and "unquestionably, therefore, the action has a *ritual* character, i.e. one removed from its

specific practical purpose.” The musical accompaniment to the hearing before the “Control Chorus” is intended “to establish a managerial (*geschäftsführende*) attitude as an heroic one.”

Die Massnahme cannot be denied an icy, inhuman greatness; structurally, it is the best and most compact play Brecht has ever written. Yet from this summit no road led on. As a propaganda play, *Die Massnahme* was unusable; no Communist country and no Communist organisation has ever staged it. The Party itself does not like so much candour; it prefers to drape the faceless power-apparatus with plush and flowers, noble motives, and a sentimental love of mankind in general, whose best interests it desires and to whose best elements it must sometimes—ah, how reluctantly!—be cruel. But even if the Party wanted it, this glorification of agents and functionaries cannot change the fact that these agents and functionaries are marionettes, “empty pages on which the organisation writes its instructions.” This transfiguration of the Party bureaucracy did not help Brecht to transcend the limitations of his shadow and puppet theatre, but only to turn its corpse-like rigidity into a religious attitude and to give it a theoretical justification. Because Brecht does not create characters, only masks, because he sets sociology—as he once set biology—in the place of psychology, “conditions” in the place of impulse, in short because he puts on the stage not living people but “objective functions,” he can indeed create situations, but not the living action that should flow out of them. There is something ironical about his noisy theatrical battle against “sympathy” when there is nothing at all to sympathise with, against the danger of “identification” with the mechanical puppets of the Brechtian theatre. Just as the masks mask only the absence of a face, so the muddled theory of “epic theatre” masks only the absence of the action that *cannot* exist because no human relationships exist. Not even a differentiation of speech or a gradation of consciousness exists between his “characters”; they all act, talk, and think with the same flat, black-and-

white clarity and precision, the agitators like the rice-merchants, the share-croppers like the landlords, the workers like the capitalists, and they are only distinguished by their labels, by their socially differentiated masks.

The Bureaucratic Plot

THE advent of the Third Reich brought the leaden emptiness of this puppet-theatre sociology brutally to light. For Brecht, at the beginning of his exile, wrote a play about fascism too—the only one of his plays ever granted the honour of being published in Russian by the Moscow State Publishing Company—*Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* (“The Roundheads and the Pointed-Heads”). So much vapid popular-Marxist twaddle has probably never been uttered about fascism. This is how Brecht’s “*Lehrstück*” presents the Third Reich: Iberin (Hitler), a cunning rogue, is hired by the bankrupt viceroy Missena (Hindenburg) to divide the rebellious proletariat. Iberin has for this purpose invented a race theory that divides the people into roundheads and pointed-heads, Tschuks and Tschiks, and so he inflames the Tschuk workers and the Tschik workers against each other. But as soon as the Tschuk workers, who have been enticed away from the revolutionary “Sickle” (and Hammer) Party, threaten the Tschik landowners, the whole farce is abruptly called off; now that the “Sickle” has been beaten, the rich Tschiks and Tschuks fall into each other’s arms once more, congratulating themselves on their fabulous dodge, while the duped Tschuk share-croppers are once more chained to their ploughs. All this takes place with the calculable, businesslike rationality of a stock-market raid, which is the only social process the philosophy of the “didactic piece” is adequate to comprehend. In *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* it declares its bankruptcy.

Later Brecht attempted to repair his error with another play, *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches* (“Fright and Poverty of the Third Reich”). This is a succession of short, unconnected scenes, some of them shrewd

hits and some of them complete misses, but all of them written with the same dreary superficiality, in which S.A. men, workers, Jews, and professors speak with the same shallow clarity and self-awareness. Little, short-winded one-act sketches or lecturing puppet-plays—two escapes from the incapacity to give dramatic shape to human events—both of them adequate, at best, to the level of a political revue.

Brecht's theories of "epic theatre" are largely a catalogue of devices to substitute for the lack of real action in his plays. Many of them are among the oldest stock properties of the theatre: the "play within a play," the (apparent) improvisation, the involvement of the audience, the suspension of the theatrical illusion, the "stepping out of character" of an actor, the song, the commenting chorus or the spoken commentary, allegory, travesty, or montage. Brecht has experimented with all these stylistic devices, and he has unquestionably become the greatest experimenter of the contemporary theatre. It is the very poverty and arbitrariness of his puppet theatre that makes possible every stylistic experiment. The actor—who is himself, according to Brecht's standing admonition, a functionary who "governs" his rôle but never identifies with it—changes masks in the twinkling of an eye, and settings shift and dissolve with a wave of the hand: one of the actors simply steps forward and plays the liquidated Party misfit (*Die Massnahme*), God (*Mahagonny*), or the judge (*Mann Ist Mann, Mahagonny, Kreidekreis*).

But the oldest as well as the most infallible of these substitutes for dramatic development is the trial scene, which replaces plot with a case, the human being with a dossier, dramatic movement with a ritually determined ceremonial, and the final resolution with a verdict. In a sense, the trial scene is present in all of Brecht's plays, but it is central in the didactic pieces (*Die Massnahme, Lukullus*). In principle, the didactic piece is itself a trial, with the audience as judge, the audience which represents "the people" as it should be—and in order to make sure that it will be what it should be, it is itself brought

on the stage, with the actor-functionaries also playing the audience by proxy. But in any case the characteristic feature of the Brechtian trial scene is that no justice is administered. The trial proceeding is nothing but a bureaucratic allegory of the political struggle, a formalistic substitute for dramatic action in which the verdict has long ago been reached.

The Art of Teaching Nothing

CERTAINLY didactic theatre is one of the possibilities of drama. It is not new and Brecht did not invent it. The bourgeois theatre of Diderot and Lessing was didactic drama, the "theatre as a moral institution" was dramatic pedagogy. But the precondition of didactic theatre is that it have an idea to teach—and the characteristic of Brecht's didactic theatre is that it teaches nothing. For him, the form of the didactic piece is an end in itself. Brecht's ideas are ideas *about* the theatre, and his fundamental idea is that the theatre should teach—but what it should teach remains undefined. It is significant that Brecht has never found a poetic image, nor even a formulation of his own, for the content of his teaching; when he wishes to define his doctrine he unfailingly, monotonously, and leadenly falls back on the one formula with which Marx contented himself in his essay on Feuerbach, which says everything and nothing: "to change the world." In *Die Massnahme*, that formula suffices as the ethical justification for the kangaroo killing:

... *Einzig mit dem
Unleugbaren Willen, die Welt zu verändern,
begründeten wir
Die Massnahme. . . .*

(We based the measure only on the undeniable will to change the world. . . .)

"Change the world, it needs it," that is all the doctrine to be found in any of Brecht's didactic pieces, and when he wishes to fill out the formula it rattles emptily and stridently, like an insanely mechanised prayer-wheel, its repetition adding nothing to its content:

DER GELERNTÉ CHOR: *Habt ihr die Welt verbessert, so
Verbessert die verbesserte Welt. Gebt sie auf!*

DER FÜHRER DES GELERNTEN CHORS: *Marschier!*
DER GELERNTÉ CHOR: *Habt ihr die Welt verbessernd die Wahrheit vervollständigt, so
Vervollständigt die vervollständigte Wahrheit.
Gebt sie auf!*

DER FÜHRER DES GELERNTEN CHORS: *Marschier!*
DER GELERNTÉ CHOR: *Habt ihr die Wahrheit vervollständigend die Menschheit verändert, so
Verändert die veränderte Menschheit.
Gebt sie auf!*

DER FÜHRER DES GELERNTEN CHORS: *Marschier!*
DER GELERNTÉ CHOR: *Ändernd die Welt, verändert euch!
Gebt euch auf!*

DER FÜHRER DES GELERNTEN CHORS: *Marschier!*
(*Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis. 1930.*)

(*The educated chorus: If you have bettered the world, then/ Better the bettered world./ Abandon it!*

The leader of the educated chorus: March!

The educated chorus: If, bettering the world, you have added to the truth, then/ Add to the added-to truth./ Abandon it!

The leader of the educated chorus: March!

The educated chorus: If, adding to the truth, you have changed mankind, then/ Change changed mankind./ Abandon it!

The leader of the educated chorus: March!

The educated chorus: Changing the world, change yourselves!/ Abandon yourselves!

The leader of the educated chorus: March!)

(“The Baden Didactic Piece on Agreement”)

Abandon yourselves! March . . . And that was what happened. Germany marched—into the void.

The Expropriation of Literary Property

ALMOST all of Brecht’s work falls between the extremes of form and content represented by *Baal* and *Die Massnahme*, and the range is smaller than it may look at first sight. Bertolt Brecht is unquestionably one of the greatest and most fertile disturbers, stimulators, and revolutionisers of

the contemporary German theatre; and yet he may go down in theatrical history rather as a great director than a great dramatist. He himself has never really created a plot: debating scenes, the puppet theatre of the didactic pieces, sketches and loose sequences of scenes in cabaret or revue style seem to mark the limits of his own powers of dramatic construction. All his figures, the vegetatively contemplative ones of the *Baal* period like the marionettes of his “activist” stage, have the same quality of stubborn immobility, the same cocoon-like inner and outer loneliness. Brecht himself, the reserved and cautious man who never burned a bridge nor closed a door behind him, is perhaps the opposite of a dramatic temperament. But he is full of ideas about the theatre and its social function, full of inexhaustible joy in the craft-like aspects of his art. The material, the plots, and the characters he takes where he can find them.

The literature of half the world, at first, second, or third hand, has been melted down and recast to form part of Brecht’s already enormous and disorderly *œuvre*, while future students of literature will be provided with the material for source-tracing or comparative dissertations for a long time to come. Here are Marlowe’s *Edward II*, Sophocles’ *Antigone*, John Gay’s *Beggar’s Opera*, Schiller’s *Johanna*, Goethe’s *Faust*, Hasek’s *Schweik*, Gorki’s *Mother*, Lenz’s *Hofmeister*, and Grimmelshausen’s *Mother Courage*, and the forms of appropriation extend from simple travesty, through the dramatic reworking of stage-pieces and the reworking for the stage of novelistic material, to the complete transposition of the problems and themes taken over. The materials mingle in curious and often confusing combinations: in the “Three-Penny Opera,” for instance, John Gay’s old parody-opera is interlaced with Kiplingesque motifs and the Villon ballades are taken over without a change from Ammer’s German translation. Above all, Brecht untiringly reworks what he himself has done, borrowing, re-using, and re-interpreting, so that his work has finally been transformed into a complete labyrinth. He

drew on the poetry of *Hauspostille* for everything from the "Three-Penny Opera" and "Mother Courage" to the "Good Man of Szechuan." There are different versions of the same play, as there are, for that matter, of his poems.*

The truth is that Brecht has for many years been not a playwright but a *régis seur*. The theory of "epic theatre" itself is intended for the director, not the dramatic author. According to this theory, the action that takes place on the stage is not the content of the drama but the object of a demonstration intended for the critical eye of the audience, to be taken apart and analysed sociologically. Since Brecht transformed himself from a poet into a "teacher," his aim has been not to create dramas but to dissect them—and for that purpose other men's dramas serve as well as his own.†

This is not to raise the old problem of "intellectual property," to which Brecht proclaimed his indifference from the very beginning of his career. His directorial mastery is marvellous, and he has breathed new life into some mediocre or antiquated plays by appropriating and reworking them in this way; this appropriation was, in Brecht's fruitful period, a form of self-discovery, and

he put the stamp of his eccentric, scurrilous, brilliant, unmistakable, and unseizable personality on almost everything he borrowed. What remains questionable is the unconcern with which Brecht since has applied this procedure to the wholly different ends of parody and travesty. Every dramatist indeed takes his plots from the limited supply of dramatic conflicts and configurations which make up the stock of world literature; his function is not to "invent," but to give shape to his material. But Brecht only rarely has allowed his vision to emerge from the plastic raw material or primitive pattern: more usually, he takes someone else's finished dramatic product and embellishes it with theatrical directions, cuts, rearrangements, interpretive additions, and ideologically "clarifying" prologues. His work as an "adapter" is not a poetical re-creation, but analysis, comment, critique, or parody, and what finally appears on the stage is not a new play but the old one *plus* Bert Brecht, who enlightens the audience about the ideological shortcomings of the work, or uses it to demonstrate the hypocrisy of its class-prejudiced author.

Parody and travesty never catch the living reality, but only a pre-existing and alien copy of it—whether that reality is a work of art, a style, or an ideology. Parody and travesty have almost always proved shorter-lived than their originals, even when they are technically superior. Thanks to the difference in time that already separates us from it, the "Three-Penny Opera" provides us with a good example of this.

The Three-Penny Opera

THE "Three-Penny Opera" and the much more daring *Mahagonny* whose fame it has overshadowed—for both of which Kurt Weill wrote the music—mark a turning-point in Brecht's work. Chronologically (1928) and thematically they stand at the border-line between lyric Expressionism and the ascetic *Lehrstücke*. Both of them are already social criticism, full of the most directly propagandistic intentions—the "Three-Penny Opera" declares itself pro-

* In the East German edition of his works published some months ago, he has once again made "ideological improvements," so that now there exists simultaneously, for *every one* of his plays, and even his prefaces, an authorised version for East Germany and another, equally authorised version for West Germany.

† A good angel, or perhaps only lack of time, has so far kept Brecht from rewriting *Hamlet* from the viewpoint of historical materialism—but the thought has occupied him for a long time. In his "Little Organon for the Theatre," he published a completed outline for the project, and in "Practice Pieces for Actors" he has offered a sample in the form of a long "Interlude for *Hamlet*" to be inserted between the third and fourth scenes of the fifth act, in which it is made clear that Hamlet's hesitation corresponds to the "new bourgeois point of view," in which commerce and well-being—the Danish fish trade—rank higher than honour, while Hamlet's decision to act represents a relapse into the "feudal point of view."

grammatically as a “depiction of bourgeois society,” and *Mahagonny*, in its revue-style, is a didactic piece about the “society based exclusively on money,” with a trial scene at its centre. But in both of them Brecht still retained all the means of expression he had brought over from his anarchist-Expressionist period, the *louche* fascination of his dive and bordello atmosphere, with whores, beggars, pirates, and highwaymen, prospectors, gangsters, and adventurers as the exclusive representatives of human society, the songs and ballads of *Hauspostille*, the green, red, or violet moon over Soho and Alabama—all this with jazz and barrel-organ music, and all the uninhibited expressive sensuousness that only jazz and hurdy-gurdies can produce. The “Three-Penny Opera” was Brecht’s great hit; after its première in Berlin he “woke up and found himself famous.”

The opera caught the whole cynical, devil-may-care mood of the boom period then drawing to a close, and its rousing songs became the great hits of the just-beginning slump. To be sure, like almost all great popular successes, this one was based on a misunderstanding. Brecht had taken his material, the thieves’ romance of Gay’s *Beggar’s Opera*, as a pretext for his new form of sociological satire. But the public took his new form as a pretext that allowed it to enjoy the old, exciting material to its heart’s content. The shrill satire became only the new sauce that gave that material savour once again, transforming it into a cynical sentimentality that exactly suited the mood of the time, and was no less sentimental than the old kind, only better armed against ridicule. The shrill of Weill’s music, the thickly caricatured pathos of the love arias, the threadbare romanticism of Jenny the Pirate’s Bride and the Barbara-Song, the pasteboard moonlight and the whorehouse *Weltschmerz* allowed even the most case-hardened to revel in romance, pathos, and sentimentality once again. And the morality of Peachum and Macheath, which was intended as an exposure of bourgeois morality, was accepted with the best will in the world as the refreshingly unhyprocritical morality of the play.

The loges and the galleries, the bourgeoisie and the Communists, took the same delight in roaring “*Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral*” (“First comes eating, then comes morality”), and “*Was hilft da Freiheit? Es ist nicht bequem! Nur wer im Wohlstand lebt, lebt angenehm*” (“What good is freedom? It’s not comfortable. The only pleasant life is being well off”).

And the public was right. Whatever Brecht the political thinker intended, Brecht the poet took a godlike joy in his gangsters, adventurers, and swindlers, and put, not only his own cynicism, but his own and Villon’s best ballads into their mouths. What Brecht declared programmatically in his notes to *Mahagonny* and what is perhaps one of the mottoes of his artistic activity, is true of the “Three-Penny Opera” too: “It still sits splendidly, so to speak, on the old bough, but (distractedly, or out of a guilty conscience) it is at least sawing it away a little.” And the branch broke with unexpected speed. . . . Today no one in Germany can listen to the “Three-Penny Opera” any more; the cadenced cynicisms to which German democracy marched into the abyss have grown shallow, they no longer seem to “hit the mark,” and they are no longer “amusing.” The ballads and songs, which came into being independently of the “Three-Penny Opera,” will live on independently. The “Three-Penny Opera” remains a curious European variant of the “musical comedy,” belonging more—if only because of Kurt Weill—to American than to European theatrical history.

Mother Courage

THEN came the Third Reich, and exile. For six years Brecht sat in Denmark, close to the German frontier, waiting the call to return. But the call never came: Fascism was not the sly diversionary manoeuvre of *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe*, and Hitler was no Iberin. Brecht wrote a few more “activistic” pieces, and some propaganda poems for the anti-Nazi radio, but they were very different now—“freedom and

democracy," which he had scorned before and was to scorn again, now became (for a few years) eternal values. His works died without an echo, and he moved further and further away from the revolutionary "activism" of the Party plays. This long "creative pause" brought a return to drama in the classic sense, even though it took place as a development of certain elements of "epic theatre." And the settings, too, moved further and further away from mere topicality: "Mother Courage" drove her sutler's wagon through the ruined Europe of the Thirty Years' War, the "Good Man of Szechuan" wandered with his three impotent idols through a half-abstract, half-mythological China, and Galileo discussed the problems of reason and stupidity, dogma and evidence, in a cloistered cell. In "The Trial of Lucullus," which in its first version was left without a verdict, with the scales hovering between the bloody conqueror and the benevolent gourmet, Brecht descended into the world of shadows. The road of exile led out of the present, into history, into timelessness, into the study where a lonely astronomer gazed through his telescope at the stars, and into an alien world beyond the grave.

The first in the series of these plays of exile, *Mutter Courage*, is probably destined to remain Brecht's most lasting achievement as a playwright, and in any case the best example of genuinely "epic theatre": neither drama, comedy, nor morality-play, but—in Brecht's own words—"a chronicle of the Thirty Years' War." The chronicle is authentic: title, personages, and plot have been lifted almost unchanged from a tale by Grimmelshausen, the greatest German writer of the epoch. Completely authentic in particular is the splendid figure of Mother Courage, the army camp *vivandière*, with her covered wagon and her three children begotten by different fathers from among the various nations of Europe: endlessly on the move through the endless war, haggling and cursing, swindling and victimised, grimly, bravely, and vainly defending her brood against seducers, press gangs, and execution squads. She is a small shareholder in the

murderous business of war; she is nourished by the slaughter and at the same time condemned to pay the price—by sacrificing her children, one after the other. Twelve years of this unequal struggle pass across the stage, and in the final scene she is alone, while the war continues: and with her lonely wagon she follows the trail of destruction through the devastated land, on the heels of ragged armies of mercenaries—Imperial, Swedish, Lutheran, Catholic: who cares? War is war. Here, in the midst of his masqued spectacles, he has created his sole living human figure, pulsating with life, not an allegory but an incarnation of human destiny—a great achievement, carried off in the teeth of all his own dramatic rules about "alienating the audience," etc. This woman with the vitality of a mother-beast and the biting tongue of a fish-wife is so forceful and poignant, the frescoes of Grimmelshausen's war epic are so brilliant, that doctrine and ideology are cast overboard: this "dramatic tale" has become a true Baroque play in which Brecht's plan and his lyrical tone have entered into a genuine union with his subject-matter. Here for once the "epic theatre" has made contact with its true creative source.

The Problem of Compromise

A NEW problem, which Brecht had never felt before, emerges in the plays of this period—the problem of compromise, and its many gradations. It is now not so simple to "change the world" as it seemed in the didactic pieces. In the tension between the "hero" and "reality," it is—in all these plays of Brecht's exile—the very unheroically depicted hero who gives in, adapts himself, and conforms.

This theme of compromise occupies the centre of the stage in Brecht's treatment of "The Life of Galileo." That is not to say that the stress falls on Galileo's dramatic recantation before the Inquisition. Nor does it fall on the triumphant and apocryphal "*E pur si muove*" in which popular legend embodied the certainty that truth lives on even when it is outlawed and persecuted. The famous

phrase is never uttered: Brecht does not share this optimism about unconquerable truth. The truth can be exterminated with its bearers, and the world can be stopped in the minds of men. Galileo simply recants before the Inquisition, the unyielding, impersonal embodiment of a dogmatism that no argument and no evidence can sway, so that he can go on working secretly and smuggle his knowledge into the freer world outside Italy. But the play raises the question of compromise in another sense too, one characteristic of Brecht in its calculating simplicity. Faced with the bitter choice between his badly paid professorship in the “shopkeepers’ republic” of Venice, which offers him freedom of investigation and protection from the Inquisition’s terror but is niggardly with the material means for research, and an invitation to the Florentine court of the Medicis, who offer him all the money and leisure he needs so long as he submits to the Church’s authority, Galileo decides for the material means of research, and goes to Florence.

In the meantime, Brecht went to America. . . .

In the “purified” East German collection of his poems called *Hundert Gedichte*, two poems stand facing each other on opposite pages: “1941” and “Hollywood.” The first was written in Finland, after the Germans had invaded Denmark and sealed off Europe:

*Auf der Flucht vor meinen Landsleuten
Bin ich nun nach Finnland gelangt. Freunde,
Die ich gestern nicht kannte, stellten ein paar
Betten*

*In saubere Zimmer. Im Lautsprecher
Höre ich die Siegesmeldungen des Abschaums.
Neugierig*

*Betrachte ich die Karte des Erdteils. Hoch
oben in Lappland,*

*Nach dem nördlichen Eismeer zu
Sehe ich noch eine kleine Tür.*

(In the flight from my countrymen/ I have reached Finland now. Friends/ Whom I did not know yesterday, set up a couple of beds/ In a clean room. On the radio/ I hear the scum announcing victories. Curious/ I look at a map of the continent. High up, in Lapland,/ Close to the Arctic Ocean/ I see one little door left.)

Now let us open a “map of the continent,” as “curious” as Brecht. Finland has one single, gigantic border that runs for more than a thousand kilometres—with Brecht’s beloved Soviet Union. Brecht overlooked it completely, his fascinated gaze saw only “one little door”: Finland’s tiny outlet on the Arctic Ocean and the West, Petsamo (which has since, for that matter, been annexed by the Soviet Union). Through this tiny gap, then, Bert Brecht chose freedom. This freedom:

HOLLYWOOD

*Jeden Tag, mein Brot zu verdienen,
Gehe ich auf den Markt, wo Lügen gekauft
werden.*

Hoffnungsvoll

Reihe ich mich ein zwischen die Verkäufer.

(Every day, to earn my bread,/ I go to the market where lies are bought./ Hopefully/ I take my place among the sellers.)

All one can say is that nothing had forced him to do so.

The Crisis of the Theatre

IN 1947 he returned, at first to Zürich, which had been his European sounding-board during the war years. It could not be said that he had not reflected long and carefully on the problem of compromise when, two years later, he made his choice between the “shopkeepers’ republic” and the new—alas so uncultivated—court of the Medicis. He chose to be the court poet, with all the advantages that useful intellectual workers enjoy there, with all the facilities he had longed for to set up his own experimental stage—but with an Inquisition. A mild one, to be sure: the “intellectual workers” of the East German Olympus, especially when, like Brecht, they are “beamed” exclusively on the West, enjoy a fool’s freedom that is unthinkable anywhere behind the iron curtain; Berlin remains, of necessity, an open window, and, in order to make the best of this unwanted situation, as well as to obscure the view, it has been decorated as a shop window for the West. Brecht himself is part of that display. And so he sits, surrounded by the secret odour of heresy, sedition, decadence,

formalism, and objectivism, tolerated for his propaganda value and gently scolded for his wilfulness—and armed, moreover, with the Austrian citizenship he foresightedly acquired, as well as with dollar contracts and Western publishing rights. So he sits, splendid and well organised, on the very outermost limb of the free world—busily sawing it through.

No one knows if he is working there, like Galileo, for posterity or a secret desk-drawer—so far we know nothing that would make us think so. Besides, he is a very busy man: the manager of a busy experimental theatre, the teacher of a group of actors and dramatic students who swear only by him, and a self-willed director who can finally put his theories into practice and train a whole troupe in the “alienation effect.” Perhaps this is the sum of all his wishes, and this little kingdom does not seem too dearly bought. If inspiration has gone, craftsmanship remains, and as a craftsman Brecht, for whom the theatre has always been a problem even more than a vocation, still has many important things to say.

The “crisis of the traditional theatre” has preoccupied the theorist Brecht for so many years that he runs over with ideas on the subject. But his ideas are what is least important here. Transforming the theatre from a “place of devotion” (*Kultstätte*) into a “place of work” (*Arbeitsplatz*) need not signify a revolution, but may be merely a new style, and is often enough only a new fashion—or not so new: showing the audience not only the puppets but also the supporting wires, not only the scenes but the machinery and the actual *mise-en-scène*, was a trick of the avant-garde of 1920. That a stage far freer from financial worries than any in the “capitalist” world must needs have a ragged curtain made from sackcloth, strikes one, not as creative innovation, but merely as a dubious, modish gesture. The secret of Brecht’s success as *régisser* is, in truth, that of good theatre the world over: a sure instinct for authenticity of style, gesture, intonation, and spectacle, and an endless pedagogical patience which knows how to get the best

even from mediocre actors, to mould them into a perfect team, and to allot them their proper rôles.

The endless, repeated, passionate conviction that the stage should be, not the locus of a beautiful illusion, but of a *statement* relevant to the spectator, lends the necessary tension and internal unity to Brecht’s work. At the bottom of all theories and theses about the “crisis of the theatre” there lies the belief that drama can continue to exist only if it “has something to say.” This is true, but it is also trivial. Unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately—these simple verities do not supply a solution, for the “something” is not and cannot be defined: there is no recipe for genuine art. What a drama “has to say” can only be said by the author *if* he has something to say. The producer-director cannot do more than help him; if he tries to go beyond his proper rôle, he falsifies. Brecht is a director of genius where he heightens the meaning of a play which happens to conform to his own attitude. He fails where he tries to impose an extraneous meaning upon works conceived in a different spirit—to “co-ordinate” them ideologically. Thus, he remains incomparable as organiser and director of his own work. Where he interprets others who do not have his characteristically dry, sceptical, somewhat misanthropically jesting cast of mind, the result is parody or worse. On the occasion of last year’s international theatre festival in Paris, Brecht’s Berlin ensemble contributed a marvellous production of his own “Caucasian Chalk Circle”—and a version of Kleist’s *Zerbrochener Krug* (the profoundest and subtlest comedy of the German Romantic movement), which for sheer banality and crudity would have disgraced an amateur performance.

THE contemporary “crisis of the theatre” is not a crisis of directing technique or style. The illusion that it can be overcome by dramatic innovation or technical trickery is itself a symptom of the crisis. Certain great historical epochs—by no means all—have found their extreme and unique expression in the theatre; but Greek tragedy was limited

to 5th century Athens; while the Elizabethan theatre and the classical French drama of the 17th century have found imitators, but no true successors. Perhaps it is no longer possible to write drama in the traditional meaning of the word. What are termed epochs of literary and artistic decline are periods characterised by a search, often violent and hectic, for new forms of expression; frequently marked by creative experiment, but denied the fulfilment of harmonious creation; times full of wild birth-pangs, innovations, parodies, epigones, and pioneers—the latter often resembling the former and vice versa. We live in such a period, when the will to achieve something new is more in evidence than the achievement itself. It does not seem likely that the “crisis of the theatre” will be overcome by subjecting the traditional ‘bourgeois’ or ‘classical’ stage to parody or ideological “reinterpretation.”

Yet experimentation in the theatre can prepare the way by working out the appropriate instruments of the new stage. As a playwright and as a director, Brecht has made an important contribution to the contemporary stage—and has likewise added to the present chaos by confusing both rôles. His own work constitutes the best refutation of his theoretical formulas, which began to flower *post factum*, after the loss of his best creative faculties. Yet Brecht has survived the Stalinist era and with it the period of ideological sclerosis; he may not yet have said his last word. Who knows what is going on inside this oddest, slyest, and craftiest poet who ever walked on God’s earth? Brecht has never yet “come out of himself,” he has drawn his mask-theatre like a curtain between himself and the world. We can never be quite certain that behind that curtain he is not laughing up his sleeve.

Hubris

His bubbling egotism makes the extreme gesture
And starving on a doorstep mutely dies,
Or gorged must have a spin and crash his car.
Giddy with pride he follows out his nature,
Peeving or roaring, plunges through the skies
And sinks to nowhere like a falling star.

Bryan Guinness

The last straw

I WATCHED them troop through the gates of glory—
The children, the saints, the fools, the wise,
Lovers and lunatics keeping their trysts,
Haggard, ecstatic, young and hoary—
Finished their earthly enterprise.

And I asked of the Angel with chrysoprase eyes,
Who had shut me out with a “*Very sorry,*”
As the sound of the Trump echoed out of the skies,
And I turned to the track that downward twists . . .
So it’s all come true, then—the old, old story!
But *must* I mix with the moralists!

Three poems

by

Walter de la Mare

This is the end

“THIS is the end;” the anguished word
Scarce stirred the air. She bowed her head.
What token was mine that though I had heard
I shared that bitter dread.

Above us loomed the night-black tree;
Beneath, a valley in shadow lay;
A waning moon beyond the sea
Cast a faint sickly ray.

Once, “Oh, have courage!” had been my cry;
Now mutely aghast I gazed into
Her face distorted, and caught the sigh
That shook her through and through.

No, no. Why further should we roam?
Since every road man journeys by
Ends on a hillside far from home
Under an alien sky!

Where souls disconsolate and sick
That Valley scan each treads alone—
That Sea whose menace leaves the quick
Colder than churchyard stone.

“By Order!”

SLANT sunshine, and these naked fields once more
Evening: the wayfarer now nearing home.
Once it was, “Surely, I’ve been here before!”
Now, “Why has all so strange to me become?”

Through crowds I wander, isolate and alone,
As if they were mere phantasmata of my mind;
As do the autumnal birds—a *whirr*; they are gone,

A listening solitude—dark fields, a gate;
Dusk, and a baffling sign-board—“*By Order: Fate.*”

Edwin Muir

The Church

THIS autumn day the new cross is set up
On the unfinished church, above the
trees,
Bright as a new penny, tipping the tip
Of the elongated spire in the sunny breeze,
And is at ease;
Newcomer suddenly, calmly looking down
On this American university town.

Someone inside me sketches a cross—askew,
A child's—on seeing that stick crossed with a
stick,
Some simple ancestor, perhaps, that knew,
Centuries ago when all were Catholic,
That this archaic trick
Brings to the heart and the fingers what was
done
One spring day in Judaea to Three in One;

When God and Man in more than love's em-
brace,
Far from their heaven and tumult died,
And the holy Dove fluttered above that place
Seeking its desolate nest in the broken side,
And Nature cried
To see Heaven doff its glory to atone
For man, lest he should die in time, alone.

I think of the Church, that stretched magnifi-
cence

Housing the crib, the desert, and the tree,
And the good Lord who lived on poverty's
pence
Among the fishermen of Galilee,
Courting mortality,
And schooled himself to learn his human part:
A poor man skilled in dialectic art.
What reason for that splendour of blue and gold
For One so great and poor He was past all need?
What but impetuous love that could not hold
Its storm of spending and must scatter its seed
In blue and gold and deed,
And write its busy Books on Books of Days
To attempt and never touch the sum of praise.

I look at the church again, and yet again,
And think of those who house together in Hell,
Cooped by ingenious theological men
Expert to track the sour and musty smell
Of sins they know too well;
Until grown proud, they crib in rusty bars
The Love that moves the sun and the other stars.

Yet fortune to the new church, and may its door
Never be shut, or yawn in empty state
To daunt the poor in spirit, the always poor.
Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, may it wait
Here for its true estate.
All's still to do; roof, window and wall are bare.
I look, and do not doubt that He is there.

Vernon Watkins

Angel and Man

Angel: Day breaks. All sighs are ended.
The sleep of earth, the long night sleep, is over.

Man: Faint incarnation in the mists of dawn,
Why do you rouse desires I have laid down
On this sad field where the world tends her wounded
And shrouds their limbs whose eyes are shut for ever?
You are not of this life, but of the days
Of immaturity when, with upturned eyes,
I lay awake, a child, expecting miracles.
I think I waited for a star to fall.
Now it is different, and those early oracles
Have lost that power I in those nights would feel.
Yes, once I thought my dreams had been fulfilled.
I thought I saw, quite early in a field,
The annunciation of the morning star,
And that the world had ended with that light.

Angel: That early moment is come true, though late.
That moment was a prophecy of this.
To me alone was given night's darkest wisdom,
I am the first to learn what is for all.

Man: Do not so look at me, for I am ill.
I would believe you, but I cannot.
Too much is hidden.
I hear your speech, but when your speech has faded
It is the earth that counts, where these men lived.
All these the eyelid buried,
These the rough earth hides,
Where are they, then?

Angel: They are gone to the root of the tree.
Just as the red sun went behind the hill,
They pierced the shadows of imagined rest.

Man: If sighs are ended they should wake now, too.

Angel: They do wake, though your ears are not attuned
To those sunk voices which the ground transfigures.
They are like lightning, or the time in sleep
Circling the earth from which the slow leaf breaks.
They do wake, in the murmur of the leaves.

Man: The leaves made that same sound when they were living
But it was not their voices when they lived,
Nor is it now. Let others be deceived.
I know this for a place where footsteps halted
And where each footstep knocked upon the ground,
Seeking true consolation. Think of this.
Spirits were laid here to whom some were dear,
Who left them, sorrowful. Garments touched the leaves,
And where they passed I understood a language
Breathed in the robe and heard by the dumb ground.
I accept this for my portion. Grief was theirs,
And grief, their lot, is likely to be mine.
Yet in the last, most solitary dark
There lives an equilibrium in the soul
Depending on forgiveness. Grant me this,
And I shall hold truth fast without remorse
Under the turning stars.

James McAuley

Vespers

THE sunlight falling on the nursery floor
No longer brings the picture books to life.
The blood dries unavenged upon the knife;
The jewelled nightingale will sing no more
To the dead emperor; magic hopes depart.
What tears shall melt the cold glass in my heart?

And was it after all no map of truth,
That land of Snakes and Ladders where we first
Practised the soul's ascent or fell accursed?
Were they deceitful meanings that in youth
Stories and games seemed anxious to impart,
Now fixed unfading in the frozen heart?

No, Wisdom's self has shed the warm salt tears
Which melt the glassy ice; and he has willed
Nothing whatever should be unfulfilled
That childhood promised to my later years;
Only this added, which I could not know,
That first the bitter tears, like his, must flow.

Two Prose poems by Richard Selig

Overheard in the Garden

THE branches of the rosebush were languid because of summer and because the roses themselves were heavy and half-sickened by the continuous buzzing invasions of bees. "So much heat and plenitude is indeed a foretaste of what is to follow," announced a particularly effulgent rose, high up on the bush.

"These endless ravishments must stop," sighed another, trembling delicately, admitting another bee.

"The Owner seems to have abandoned us, left us to proliferate without a word of admiration; and the gardener and his wife sleep all day. There is no one to trim us, pluck us or smell us."

A newly opened rose, far over on the eastern side of the bush, said: "This morning I saw the Owner pacing in the Cypress groves by the river. He was frowning and never looked up from the ground."

A kestrel stooped on its prey. The gardener's wife, weeping, tried to attach leaves to her naked skin.

Mid-morning of a Goose

I'VE been standing here since sun-up squawking. But no one comes out of the house to ask me what's wrong. Humans I've never seen before are setting up machinery all over the place. It isn't farm machinery.

I wish I, too, had hands; I'd make me a flute or something to make another kind of noise. I'm tired of my own voice. Its distress is beginning to sound foreign to me.

For the last week the sun's risen about eight. I haven't seen the family who lives in the house since yesterday. The blinds are drawn. Men are pulling down green cloth. Because of all their metal I can't see the corn fields or the blue hills and what's worse they don't have animals with them.

Trucks are coming.

Roy Fuller

The Final Period

I WATCH across the desk the slight
Shape of my daughter on the lawn.
With youth's desire my fingers write
And then contain an old man's yawn.

At first my only verb was "give,"
In middle age sought out a god:
Ugly and impotent I live
The myth of a final period.

I see within the tetrastich
A jealousy as gross, intense,
As ulcered that real love of which
Art's tragedies alone make sense.

He pulses still the man of force—
The armoured chest, the boar-thick yards;
And here the woman-nature, coarse
Beneath the dainty silks and fards.

Appalling that should still arise
All that is dead and was untrue,
That my imagination flies
Where now my flesh may not pursue.

Life goes on offering alarms
To be imprisoned in the cage
Of art. I must invent more charms
To still the girl's erotic rage:

Frozen in their betrothal kiss,
The innocent boy will never move
To loose the codpiece, and his miss
Stay spellbound in her father's love—

And yet the actual girl will sigh
And cross the garden with her flowers;

And I will leave the desk, and try
To live with ordinary powers.

Bermuda or Byzantium—
To some utopia of forgiving
And of acceptance I have come,
But still rebellious, still living.

The first absurd haphazard meeting
With one loved unrequitedly,
The insurrection caused by fleeting
Words of my own, while I stood by—

Those fatal and recorded times
Return like heartburn, and I see
Behind heroic plangent rhymes
Unutterable deficiency.

Even this noon of greens and blues;
June's badges, roses of human red;
Birds in the cavern of the yews;
A lark's quaver figure in my head;

The car in the lane that circumvents
The archipelagos of dung—
These trivial concomitants
Of feeling, these, too, must be sung.

And in the song all will be whole,
Immortal, though the author pass—
Ended his little speaking rôle—
On to the doomed and venal mass.

She comes whom I would marble through
Her painful and tumultuous years,
So she would wake at last in true
Epochs, to music of the spheres.

NOTES FROM A DIARY

The Future of State Power

Some recent events make me wonder whether the concept of power in the modern police state is not undergoing a transformation.

Before the deaths of Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini, the Totalitarian State, acting through the police, had to aim, as far as possible, at becoming absolute. The aim was that no one should escape from an all-seeing central human will, that of the dictator, embodied in his police. The modern state had learned, through science, ways and means to make revolution impossible. The revolutionary was an anachronism who, for convenience, was put into a concentration camp.

In 1984 Orwell developed the logic of the idea to its furthest point: universalisation of the omnipotent dictatorship. He wrote his novel in the light of the diminishing ratio of the rebel to the policeman—a development that had been taking place for a hundred years. In the old days, a few hundred citizens armed with pikes and guns were sufficient to upset a government. Today a few police with up-to-date weapons equal whole populations. The only situations in which anything like old style revolution still remains possible are those of governments that are “occupying powers,” like the British in India, or the French in Algeria, surrounded by hostile thousands thinking and speaking in language and ideas as exclusive of their rulers, as a secret code. Even so the story of occupations might have been different if the occupying powers had not shrunk from treating native populations quite as vilely as Europeans have behaved to Europeans.

Is there a neo-Totalitarianism?

Totalitarianism flourished in Europe from 1925 or so until the death of Stalin. Today it appears to be a receding tide. But is this due to a democratic reaction in the countries of dictatorship? Might it not be because the totalitarian idea itself is evolving?

Consider. The dictatorships were effective, but they were also wasteful and self-destructive. They banned genius, destroyed independent thinking, and, after the first years of the excitement of living in a State dominated by a single

enthusiastic idea, condemned whole populations to apathy.

Then there was the Cult of Personality. If Russia suffered severely from this, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy were destroyed by it. The totalitarian machine did not have any built-in controls which could rid the machine of the man who gained supreme control of it, when the gods had driven him mad.

Perhaps the totalitarians have not learned to repent of being totalitarian: perhaps what they are trying to learn is how to preserve a totalitarian condition without the defects of past totalitarian organisations.

So perhaps we should ask ourselves what form neo-totalitarianism might take? Here is a suggestion.

It might be that centralised power—the ratio of the strength of the armed forces against the weakness of the potentially rebellious ones—became so great that it was no longer necessary to universalise the control of the police. The police would be so strong that individuals could be left alone. If the ratio of power at the centre were increased sufficiently, then, paradoxically, power might become unnecessary. The state would “shrivel away” into a hard impermeable centre surrounded by a softness of illusory freedoms.

A New Look for 1984

To our many readers who contemplate writing a novel about life in the year 1995, I recommend the following scenario. In the beautiful little East European state of New-Rasthenia, writers, composers, artists, and peasants are all perfectly free. They remember a bad bad time just on twenty-five years ago, when everyone was afraid of a dictator and terrible policemen, and when those who were afraid could neither say so nor get away, because the country was hedged round with electrified wire making contact with machine-guns, setting up, at a touch of an escaping hand, parallel lines of fire all along the frontier.

Then, one day, everything altered. Writers' conferences were held in Bata and Borwsk, to which young American poets were invited, painters were allowed to paint whatever they

chose (provided they never painted a member of the government or a policeman), musicians were sent out into the fields to learn tunes again from atonal birds, as in well nigh forgotten Berlin days before 1933. . . . Scientists were allowed to grow corn whatever way they chose, and develop all sorts of wild-cat, long-haired ideas.

The only fly in the ointment: deep inside the country there is an area ringed off by an impenetrable circumference of death rays. Within this area live the Collective Leadership, the Army, and the Reformed Police. Only a few—the most trustworthy—of these, are allowed to read the books, hear the music, look at the paintings, examine the experiments of the free area outside. And occasionally—when, for example, four Academicians outline the model for a new two-party system as the final guarantee against the universally undesired Cult of Leadership—a little group of policemen leaves the fortress and goes out into the area of perfect freedom. The four Academicians are not heard of again.

Now, let Winston Smith be a poet, and set him down in New-Rasthenia, and see how he will fare.

The Question of Happiness

Happiness is really a question and not a problem. In this, it resembles poetry, every observation concerning which is accompanied by a What-is-poetry? like an outrider. And as with poetry, the question seems only answered when it is not asked—*kommt nicht im Frage*. It does not arise when time seems endless. Thus animals must doubtless at times know happiness, and so do children, to whom time though not endless, seems immensely long and none of their business, because it is controlled by the adults. But “pursuit of happiness” is an illusion, because one can only pursue things along lines. What one can pursue is pleasure, which is much realer than virtuous people

suppose. In fact the religious are right to say that only the simple and the saintly can forget time, and therefore be happy, but are wrong, surely, to be supercilious about pleasure. Unhappiness is not the opposite of happiness. Thinking it is so, makes many people imagine that, because they know they are not happy, they must be unhappy. Actually unhappiness is a positive condition of awareness of loss, like bereavement. Animals can be unhappy because though unaware of death, they can be aware of loss. Unhappiness is consciousness of a gap which cannot be filled. Ivan Ilych, going about with his approaching death like a hole in his side was unhappy. Rimbaud cultivated unhappiness like a drug which scoriated the sensibility. Most people live in a stupor of contentment alternating with a stupor of discontentment.

Melancholy of Education

I am trying to teach X—— Latin, which gives me pleasure, partly because it enables me to learn Latin again myself. Yesterday we were studying the Past Participle, and I could not make him understand that it agreed with the noun to which it was bound. Trying to make him realise this, I suddenly realised that teaching children something they cannot, or do not wish to, understand is one of the basically sad, melancholy experiences. Somehow one feels that one is violating their ignorance. Also, of course, one is rudely drawing attention to their refusal or inability to learn, which it is one's privileged insolence to do: just as though they had a duty to draw attention to the age and ugliness of their elders.

Brightly Vanishing Ideas

Sometimes an idea comes into the mind which one immediately forgets. It leaves a vague appetite like hunger for some delicious, unidentifiable food.

Stephen Spender

Vitaliano Brancati

Pipes and Walking-Sticks

ON WINTER afternoons, when an entire neighbourhood may hear the clatter of a tin can rolled by the wind from a street into a square and then into a courtyard, then back into the square and to the street again, the hurried pedestrian who glances at the façades of the buildings, sombre and quiet as though heaped with stones inside, may catch sight of an old man gesturing to him from behind a balcony. The pedestrian stops, trying to recognise this friend who is greeting him. But the old man is neither friend nor acquaintance; for no one has ever greeted another by forking his fingers against the evil eye and muttering between his lips, "Drop dead!" The old man is bundled in a shawl, his cap with visor is pulled down over his eyes, a burning smell rises from his trousers where he has unthinkingly pocketed his still-lit pipe: he is chill-blooded, hot-headed. All over his body—on his chest, between his shirt and combinations, in his jacket—he has hidden holy medals and coloured pictures of the saints (one, of St. Agatha, even in his cap, where it is often left stuck to the top of his head). Sometimes he creeps up on the cot of his great-grandson and snatches the sugar-teat from his tiny paw, making off with it as the cot gives out squawls. And he works charms against passers-by who, in his view, cast the evil eye at his balcony. His advanced age has deprived him of the endless strolls he used to take up and down the main street, walking a trifle disjointedly, jogging along, aimlessly

noisy like a tin can kicked by a child or set to rattling by the wind (this way of walking, it happens, is called *lannuniarisi* in Sicily, from *lanna*, the word for "tin"), and has kept him behind doors, at home, for five years. Old men, in Sicily, end their days like the chairs they sit in the day through, the curtains, the door-mat, the earthen jug. Two or three quirks and five or six tics will be their most faithful companions until they die. The city over which they cast their incurious gimlet eye would be utterly deserted for them were it not that they knew that near the church dome, behind a little window giving on to a dormer, there lives another old man, a contemporary of theirs, still another under a little balcony atremble with wash, and a third in a little green house next door to the opera house. Their sole curiosity is to know which of them will be the first to drop from the branch of life. The larks of long-ago summers—plunging all together into the water to see who is the last up, or dashing across the sand to see whose wind is the longest—are reduced now to this strange, unhappy contest to see who will live the longest.

An old attorney, hearing that one of his contemporaries had taken gravely ill, used each morning to shout for his newspaper to be brought at once, and, diving into the pages, skipping over the war threats, the earthquakes, the speeches of eminent men, his eye would race down the obituary column, and, failing to find the name he sought, he would groan, "No, gentlemen!"

hurling the paper to the floor. Not that he hated the other old man, or that he was bad-hearted: he was only curious, with that singular curiosity of old folks, about the duration of their bodies.

In the house of a prince this unhappy contest had at last come to be waged between the father, aged 110, and his son of 90. With the two men beyond passions, pleasures and displeasures, and no longer addressing each other Father and Son—the last to say Papa was the prince to the princeling—there remained, in all the house, but the shuffling footsteps of a retainer, himself decrepit. When the son died the prince was reading the titles of some books, and when, weeping with dry eyes, the old retainer came to announce, “The young prince is dead!” the centenarian nobleman, first searching his memory for something that escaped him, and, in his own way, making a reckoning of years and of persons passed on, pursed his lips and rejoined, “He wasn’t so very young, after all!”

ALSO back and forth across the ceiling of my own room went the footsteps of an old man, with a ceaseless sound, far away, but by that time familiar to my ear as the bore of a woodworm. For two years Uncle Ciccio, my father’s elder brother, had occupied a room on the third floor, which he left five or six times to go to the station and a score of times to go up to the terrace.

By good fortune, he was not decrepit and had no quirks. Of all the old men whom I have seen voluntarily cage themselves in a loft like tired birds, he was the most normal and sober. The room he lived in was large and bright, cluttered with newspapers, books, footstools, pipes, shoes, and walking-sticks. One window, large as a door, framed a view of hundreds of rooftops, the port, and on certain limpid evenings a sickle of moon that rose on and on into the deep and vasty blue. Seldom did my uncle light his lamp: his reading ended with the day, and, for that matter, even during the day he often left his chair and went to the window. His only idiosyncrasy was a word he uttered from time

to time, in so soft a tone and of a tenderness so profound in its brevity that it always moved me. This word was *H’m!* There was neither dejection in it nor perplexity, joy nor disappointment; or rather, there was no single human feeling to a strong and noticeable degree, but a very delicate and profound blend of all. Just as an instrument that is played for years by virtuosi comes at last to sound an *A* or an *E* of rare quality, so it was that my uncle, handled for years by life, was able to create a unique tone, a monosyllable that never failed to thrill me.

His life had been rich with deeds and experiences, but he had drawn from them no rule. This saved him from the danger of dying among the proverbs, like so many other Sicilians. Many things had struck him as strange and he had not been able to understand them. But he did not let them worry him, nor did he believe it his right to pronounce high-sounding phrases like *The Mystery of Life* or *The Unknown*. He was content to scrutinise them in his memory, to look at them and look again; and in the end he would say, “*H’m!*”

. . . One Christmas Eve in the cathedral, while the music was rising over the chime of the sacring-bell, the daughter of Prince C. had stared wide-eyed at him throughout the ceremony, as if expecting a reply. Two days later they caught her tying the end of a rope to a chair, the other end of which was in a slip-knot round her neck. And why? He had never seen her before that Christmas Eve, and he never saw her again. Yet, that night, was it him she had looked at like that, or someone else, or at St. Rita’s feet shining so close by his head? . . . My uncle let forth two or three puffs of smoke and said softly, “*H’m!*”

His first wife had died in the dark, on a summer’s evening, sitting before him. She had suddenly stopped talking and begun to look at him. He did not understand and fell silent, too, now and then responding to her gaze which seemed to him, in the dark, so child-like and tender.—For an hour without understanding. . . “*H’m!*”

His second wife had died, too. But of his

second wife he remembered little. She had been kind and loving and simple, and he couldn't remember a single act of hers; some words perhaps; certainly not her eyes.

When he was a child he used to gaze up at the sky from a little window: a ragamuffin, passing along the street, flung his cap into the air. There was no clearer, no more profound and lasting memory for my uncle than that of the black cloth scaling the blue . . . slowly falling back again.

And if he remembered even more frivolous things, virtually devoid of meaning, he would let out his monosyllable, as a guitar-string will hum if touched by the tail of a dog—a boat gliding too slowly the evening of the second of May, fifty years ago. . . . The yellowish eye of a sheep. . . . A hotel dormer-window. . . . A maths teacher's mark book. . . . These things as well, like the former, did not strike him as very unusual, or even very simple. Why had his father's father needed to sleep with a chair at hand? . . . And why

hadn't his friend Filadelfo ever telephoned to anyone in all his life? . . . "H'm!"

In a drawer my uncle kept a large number of photographs and wrappers. Among them, there was also a letter from a German woman who, by singular circumstances, had managed to learn, or believed she had, that he, my uncle, had killed her son in battle. "Dear Sir," the letter read, "I cannot reprove you, for there are some things that even a mother can understand. But I wonder how many times you missed before then, how many times you hit a stone with your rifle. His name was Fritz—Federico—and he had small hands. Oh, sir, if only you had hit a stone then, too! . . ." It was not often that my uncle read this letter; but whenever it fell into his hands he would cross to the window with it, his eye would race over the page as he turned it over and over, and then he would say softly, "H'm!"

(Translated from the Italian by Ben Johnson)

In the Laboratory

In this bottle you see morning
on this shelf is grass
here are specimens of turning,
nights which you must pass;

love distilled from antique mirrors
tinctures made of breath
pills of joy and powdered terrors
things to ease your death;

the formulas of secret fears
catalogues of dreams
the bones of hope, the flesh of tears
what is and what seems;

all, all has been found out, tested,
certified as true;
time alone must be invested:
we depend on you.

Jascha Kessler

Letter from NEW YORK

At a *Vecherinka*

THE other Saturday night, I went to a *vecherinka*. I was invited by S. M. Levitas, who had been an active Socialist in Russia before the Revolution and is now executive editor of the New York weekly, *The New Leader*. "A *vecherinka*," he explained, "is a little evening." (*Vecher*, the Russian for evening, and *inka*, the diminutive.) "No heavy banquet, no heavy speeches, just a light evening, some little sandwiches, some *chai* (tea), some good talk—what the French would call a *soirée*."

"What is it for?" I asked.

"The *vecherinka*," he replied, "is for the thirty-fifth anniversary of the *Sozialisticheskyy Vestnik*, the organ of the foreign delegation of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party."

"You mean the Mensheviks?" I said.

"Of course," replied Levitas.

Well, of course. *Everybody* knows that the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party was the working-class party in Russia, in contradistinction to the Russian Social Revolutionary Party, the so-called S.R.s, who spoke for the peasants. In 1903, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party had split into two factions, the Bolsheviks or majority-ites, and the Mensheviks or minority-ites. By 1912 the Bolsheviks had split into three additional factions. So had the Mensheviks. (So for that matter had the Social Revolutionaries. But the Social Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania split only into two factions.) When Lenin and the Bolsheviks went on to overturn the Russian democratic Republic, they abandoned the name Social Democrats and called themselves Communists. The Mensheviks picked up the banner of Social Democracy and, in 1921, carried it abroad.

In Berlin, the foreign delegation of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (the bulk of the party, still in Russia, was to be hunted down and decimated by the secret police), now under the leadership of Fyodor

Dan and Raphael Abramovitch, launched the *Vestnik*, the "Courier." Now, thirty-five years later, after an exciting career in Berlin, in Paris, and since 1943 in New York, the *Vestnik* was celebrating an anniversary of unbroken publication. An enviable record for any magazine, and an astounding performance for a periodical launched in foreign seas and held afloat by the pfennigs, centimes, and pennies of several hundred émigrés, many of whom, despite their cultured background, could obtain only menial jobs, yet whose dedication had kept the *Vestnik* going. So now, thirty-five years later, there was to be a *vecherinka* for the *Vestnik*.

THE *vecherinka* was being held in a small hall on the upper west side of Manhattan, in a building labelled, appropriately enough, the Free Sons. It was, actually, a centre run by the Free Sons of Israel, and apparently was used by a liberal congregation for services, but there was little in the hall to suggest any religious theme. The main room itself was about sixty feet long and thirty feet wide. The long walls, divided into three large panels, were painted a dull yellow. The only decorations in the room were two large paintings, about six by nine feet, facing each other on the first panels as one entered. Each picture was of George Washington. The one at the right, of dull reddish hue, was a copy of the familiar Gilbert Stuart portrait, but showing a standing figure, finger pointing to some document. The other, thickly brown, almost black, and difficult to make out, was a Washington standing alongside a dark grey horse whose head was curved low, as if in tribute. The other four panels were bare. At the back, on one side, was a long table on which were piled some dishes, mounds of small sandwiches, and little heaps of lemon. In the room itself were about sixty to seventy small round tables pushed close together, leaving but a

narrow aisle down the centre of the hall; on the tables were cups and saucers. At the front of the hall was a raised platform, and on it, a long pine table, covered with a white cloth. The wall behind it was bare. But on the table was a small ceramic vase with a burst of gorgeous red roses. One table, in front of the platform, also had a vase with magnificently large red roses. These were the only marks of colour to relieve the slight dinginess of the hall.

When we entered there were about three hundred or more persons already crowded into the room. They were equally divided into men and women, and all seemed to know each other. The men were almost all elderly, in their sixties and seventies, grey-haired, white-haired, and bald, but the number of finely modelled heads and finely shaped white beards was striking. One needed only the large white blouses and red sashes to put them back into Russian fields. At this *vecherinka*, however, almost all wore conservative business suits, while the women had on mainly quiet, often well-tailored, clothes. (A seamstress, after all, is a traditional émigré vocation.) Occasionally one would see a more youthful face, a son or daughter perhaps, but there were not many. Yet the crowd was gay, the buzz of conversation was loud. Almost everyone talked Russian, and though I don't speak or understand the language I could make out words like *organizatsiya*, *Amerikanski*, *Stalin*, *naznya*, *Noo Leeder*, and either some clearing of throat or some syllables which sounded like *Khrushchev*. No one was drinking *chai* yet, or eating sandwiches, but the "little evening" was young.

At about 8 p.m., Levitas, who it turned out was to be master of ceremonies, mounted the platform and called the crowd to quiet. He spoke in Russian, and my neighbour translated for me. While this was a *vecherinka*, he said, naturally there were a few individuals, various friends of the *Vestnik*, in the room who would be called upon to say a few words of greeting before bringing in the *chai*. Thereupon he called up to the platform Professor Michael Karpovich of Harvard, one of the foremost Slavic scholars in the country; Mark Vishniak, the former secretary of the Russian Constituent Assembly, and now head of the Russian desk at

Time magazine; Norman Thomas, the American socialist leader; Nathan Chanin, of the Jewish Socialist *Verband*; and Irakli Tseretelli, one of the legendary figures in the struggle against the Tsar and a leader of one of the three Menshevik factions in the Second Duma.

KARPOVICH had been a Cadet (a conservative) and Vishniak an S.R. (Social Revolutionary). Once, a dozen years ago, I had said to Vishniak familiarly, "Hello, you old Menshevik," and he had replied, quite seriously, "Oh, no, I am an S.R." These differences remained—after all, in exile, what is there left but political identity? I settled back in my chair. Five greetings to listen to. Well, one had to have some sentiment on such an occasion, and thirty-five years was no mean achievement.

Levitas began his introductions. The sentences rolled forth. He speaks quite well, I thought. My mind wandered back to the quarrels Melvin Lasky and I had had with Levitas when we were on the *New Leader* together and how the hot-tempered arguments would end with Levitas stalking out of the room muttering "Dan-ists" (not for my first name but for Fyodor Dan who had led a left-wing faction out of the *Vestnik* group). Through the haze of my memories, his speech rolled on. When Levitas finished, the audience began applauding for the first speaker, but nobody on the platform stood up. In fact all the speakers were applauding too. From a table in front of the hall, and out from behind the large bouquet of red roses, a small erect man, with thick glasses and trim beard, stepped forth. It was Raphael Abramovitch, the editor of the *Vestnik* and acknowledged doyen of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.

On the night of Wednesday, November 7th, 1917, when the Bolsheviks had seized the Winter Palace to begin their insurrection, Abramovitch had stood up at the meeting of the Second Congress of the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies, and trembling with rage had declared: "What is taking place now in Petrograd is a monstrous calamity!" And, as John Reed, tells the story, in his *Ten Days That Shook The World*:

"Abramovitch raised his voice and hand. 'Our duty to the Russian proletariat doesn't

permit us to remain here and be responsible for these crimes. Because the firing on the Winter Palace doesn't cease, the Municipal Duma together with the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, and the Executive Committee of the Peasants' Soviet, has decided to perish with the Provisional Government, and we are going with them! Unarmed we will expose our breasts to the machine guns of the Terrorists. . . . We invite all delegates to this Congress—.' The rest was lost in a storm of hoots, menaces, and curses which rose to a hellish pitch as fifty delegates got up and pushed their way out. . . ."

Outside, Abramovitch, Avksentiev, the venerated spokesman for the peasants, and several hundred socialist and peasant deputies began their march, four abreast, down the Nevsky, raising lanterns and singing the Marseillaise, moving toward the Winter Palace. At the corner of the Ekaterina Canal, a group of sailors, guns in hand, barred their way. There was argument and commotion. But the menacing guns held the corner, and the marching column, dispirited, turned back. Inside the hall of the Soviets, as Reed describes the scene, the shouting had continued.

"Kamenev jangled the bell, shouting, 'Keep your seats and we'll go on with our business.' And Trotsky, standing up with a pale face, letting out his rich voice in cool contempt, 'All these so-called Socialist compromisers, these frightened Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, Bund—let them go! They are just so much refuse which will be swept into the garbage-heap of history!'"

Kamenev died in the cellars of the Lubianka, with a bullet at the base of his brain. Trotsky, hunted and pursued, was murdered with a pick-axe in his skull. And there was Abramovitch in New York, vigorous and trim, his eyes snapping behind his thick glasses, speaking of his still living hopes that Russia would find a democratic path.

WHEN he finished speaking, Abramovitch sat down among his friends, and Levitas turned to the business at hand of introducing the fraternal greeters. It was

quite clear now. Naturally Abramovitch could not be among the greeters to his own magazine, so he sat in the audience. He had responded, as is the custom, to the first warm words of the chairman. So, still five speakers ahead before the *chai*. First came Karpovich. He spoke quietly, seriously, his theme, apparently, the vulgar interpretations of Marxism by its critics. Then came Vishniak, commenting on the changes in the Soviet Union and pointing to the tensions that exist. An eloquent tribute from Norman Thomas: it was an affirmation of a socialist's faith and a warning that America could not hope to win over the people of India and Indonesia by parading pictures of American wealth since many of the intellectuals of those countries were convinced that only by disciplining the masses, in Soviet fashion, could their countries gain the wealth that America displayed. Chanin, whose first tongue is Yiddish, got the sympathy of the audience by reading his talk in Russian; it was not, one gathered, a bravura performance, but a good try nevertheless.

Four speakers had finished and it was ten o'clock. Well, the evening was young, and it could still be a light one. Only Tseretelli remained as a speaker. Levitas began a new introduction. Tseretelli turned and gazed out at the rear of the room. Most of the audience turned, too. Then Levitas finished, and a man stood up at the rear and began talking. "Who is that," I asked a table companion, Wacław Solski, the noted Polish novelist, in bewilderment. "It is a delegate from the Latvian Socialist Party speaking from the floor," he replied placidly. "There was not enough room on the platform. If there is time," he continued, "there will be greetings from the Lithuanian Socialist Party and the Polish Socialist Party."

I settled back, dismayed. But the audience looked fresh, and certainly it was attentive. Following the Latvian, Levitas began a long story and seemed to be crying Wolf, but it turned out to be Bertram D. Wolfe, the author of *Three Who Made a Revolution*, who paid tribute, as an American, to the fortitude of these exiles. Then a balding man in his mid-thirties, introduced as the "youngest American Menshevik," spoke briefly on the contributions of the *Vestnik* group to thought and scholarship in the U.S.

Finally it was clear that Tseretelli was to

speak. (With the *chai* getting cold, Levitas had decided, apparently, to forgo the Latvian and Polish greetings.) "It's a pity you can't understand Russian," whispered a neighbour. "He speaks such a beautiful, pure Russian." I regarded Tseretelli curiously. At the age of twenty-six, he had been the leader of the Social Democratic Deputies in the Second Russian Duma of 1907. "*A madman*," wrote the arch-conservative Novoe Vremya, "*a madman, but the most brilliant Deputy in the Duma*." The Tsarist government had so feared this "madman" that when the Second Duma was peremptorily dissolved, it had jailed him. For ten years he had lived in Siberia, writing articles from exile. When he returned in March 1917 from Irkutsk, a workers' delegation had greeted him, band playing. Sukhanov, writing in his diary, reported that he had grumbled over this large turn-out, and Uritsky, a leading Menshevik, had answered, "*Well, you know, Tseretellis don't arrive every day*." (Uritsky joined the Bolsheviks three months later, became an official of the secret police, and was assassinated in August 1918.)

Tseretelli had been a Zimmerwaldist, that is, one of the group of international socialists who had opposed the war. But in his first speech on his return, and as Sukhanov notes, "*of course it became the centre of the subsequent debates*," he called for extended mobilisation for defence against the Germans and the protection of the revolution. "*Up to then*," Sukhanov writes, "*we had not heard such trenchant and plain-spoken speeches along these lines*..." Tseretelli had become one of the spokesmen for the Menshevik party. At the first conference in April, when an attempt was made to unify the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, he was the one chosen to answer Lenin. In the first coalition cabinet, with Kerensky as Premier, he had become Minister of Interior as well. After

October, he had gone to his native Georgia where he became one of the leaders of the short-lived Menshevik Caucasian Republic; and after 1920, once again into the long night of exile.

The crowd itself was hushed. Tseretelli, his fine, close-cropped head held high, his eyes, deep-set and dark, gazing straight ahead, spoke slowly, his voice, rich and resonant as the strong Russian "r's" vibrated in his speech. He spoke for about a half-hour. At one point when the phrase "mania of leftism" broke harshly from his lips, a buzz swept his slightly leftish audience. Both he, and they, seemed to be back thirty-nine years. He finished abruptly, with no advance warning, with no oratorical wind-up.

THE audience, happy, relaxed. Every night in the week, among these Russians, there were endless debates and talk. But once a year, at least, there had to be a respite from these interminable disputes, one evening had to be a light one, one evening had to be a *vecherinka*. A score of women began bustling down the aisle, carrying plates of sandwiches and pots of *chai*. It was eleven o'clock, and the *vecherinka* was in full swing.

A woman beside me hailed someone else who was weaving his way through the tables.

"Meet Victor Shimkin," she said to me.

"He is an editor of the *Novoe Russkoe Slovo*."

"No, it's not a Menshevik paper," he said, as if anticipating my question, "but we are democrats, and I bring fraternal greetings to the *Vestnik*." Then, brightening, he said, "Soon, Abramovitch will make his speech."

"But he has already talked, and *everybody* has already talked," I said weakly.

"Oh, those were just greetings," said Shimkin placidly. "This is a *vecherinka*, of course, but there has to be *one* serious speech."

Daniel Bell

Discussion

Austrian Society Past and Present

IN HIS fascinating article on "Italy and its Aristocracy," published in last January's number of *ENCOUNTER*, Signor Luigi Barzini found a most felicitous phrase when, after discussing the collapse of "the picture-book Italy of the sentimental novels," he wrote: "That Italy does exist it would be foolish to deny." In the case of Austria, however, I feel tempted to deny that it really does exist, except in the realm of phantasy. What the word "Austria" evokes for me and my contemporaries, the people who attained the age of reason just before the First World War, is an abstract idea.

We grew up surrounded by the vestiges of a magnificent past, and we were inclined to see ourselves as the inhabitants of an empire over which the sun never set. Though we had sunk politically to the position of a third-rate power, we still felt that Vienna was the real capital of Central Europe, the actual centre of the Holy Roman Empire. Even the good Empress Maria Theresa still belonged to our daily life, with many boys one knew being educated at the Theresianum, and a mellow piece of inlaid furniture called a "*Maria Theresienkasten*" to be found in every drawing-room. Naturally, when we spoke of the Emperor, we meant Emperor Franz Josef; William II was always referred to as "the German Emperor," and some elderly people still insisted on calling him "the King of Prussia." Less than half a century had elapsed since 1870, and history did not march on as rapidly as it does today.

The very language we spoke had hardly changed since the 18th century, when Maria Theresa had announced the birth of her first male grandchild by calling down from her box at the Burgtheater: "*Hört's Leutln, mei Poldi hat an Bubn!*" ("Listen, folks, my Poldi has a boy"). To the uninitiated, this might seem exactly like the speech of the Viennese populace, but there are vast differences in pronunciation and intonation between that nasal, urban dialect and the *lingua franca* of Austrian society, the so-called "*Aristokratendeutsch*." The latter contained a great number of foreign words, chiefly French, as well as many idioms taken from the dialect, and it was also distinguished by a

marked avoidance of certain grammatically correct forms. Thus—just as in the dialect—the use of the imperfect was eschewed on principle: to say "*ich ging*" instead of "*ich bin gegangen*," "*ich sagte*" instead of "*ich hab' gesagt*," would have been considered insufferably affected, an aping of the North Germans. (It was not considered "quite the thing" to be German!)

Nowadays, many words are pronounced by well-born people in a way that would have been considered definitely "non-U" when I was young—as, for instance, "*nervös*" (nervous) and "*graziös*" (graceful), which had to be spoken without the *Umlaut*. I remember getting a terrific scolding from my mother for not having said *nervos* to rhyme with rose. I have often wondered what the origin of this obsolete taboo might have been: was it because the Austrians had originally taken these words from the Spanish, under Charles V, and not from the French, which would represent a more recent influence? Or might there be a hidden psychological connection between the purposeful deformation of French words and the far more comprehensive outlawing to be found in England of all words of French origin, like *serviette*, *costume*, *perfume*, etc.? Did these words, which surely began by being "elegant," become tainted, as it were, when the lower middle-classes started to use them?

The upper classes in Austria formed a society which, like Cæsar's Gaul, was "*divisa in partes tres*." There was the *Erste Gesellschaft*, consisting of the members of mediatised princely houses whose names are found in the Part II of the Almanach de Gotha, and of all those families who had an automatic entrée at Court by the fact that they had sixteen quarterings (i.e. their great-great-grandparents had all been of noble birth). One did not need to be rich to belong to this "first society," it was purely a question of pedigree. The hereditary land-owners belonged to this class, so there was a patriarchal and friendly relationship between its members and the rustic population.

Conversely, the *Zweite Gesellschaft* usually had no roots in the soil, for it was made up of government officials, army officers, and a few

prominent members of the professional classes who had been knighted for their services and merits in more recent times.

The *Dritte Gesellschaft* represented the plutocratic element, and included the barons of industry and the *grande bourgeoisie*. The women of the different castes knew each other by sight, but it was rare that they actually met. Every member of the "first society" (on the royal assumption that "we are all cousins") automatically addressed every other—though only of the same sex—with the intimate "*Du*."

The Byzantine caste-system which hemmed in the women in Austrian society did not hamper the men to the same extent. A connecting link was formed between them by the army, the unique institution of the *K. und k. Armee*, into which General Radetzky (1766–1858), the victor of Novara and father of his troops, had infused a spirit of democracy which was lacking in the German army. He insisted that all officers of the army, irrespective of class, nationality, or creed, should treat each other as brothers and the men under their command as sons. As military service was obligatory, all male Austrians had been members of this great family in their youth. Boys of good family who showed no special aptitude for statesmanship or Holy Orders automatically chose the army as a profession—but once he was in a good regiment, even a young man of obscure origins would be accepted in society . . . unless his behaviour was too patently "*von daneben*."

"*Von daneben*" (literally "from next to it") was the expression which described anything non-U in my girlhood. Then, after the First World War, this evocative word was displaced by "*portierisch*," which is still in use today. (The *Portier* is not a porter, but a *concierge*.) When I was young, many things were considered *von daneben* which, even by the wildest stretch of imagination, could not be called *portierisch*. Unfortunately, any evidence of culture was included in this sweeping condemnation. It was not done to evince too great an interest in literature, poetry, or philosophy, or to admire modern painting and music. Viennese society had changed since the early decades of the 19th century, when the aristocracy and the wealthy bourgeoisie vied with each other as patrons of the arts. In a society where the Court sets the tone, the person of the sovereign must influence the entire trend of cultural life. Our dear old Emperor, whom we all regarded with affectionate reverence, was the very contrary of a highbrow. (A pathetically disarming passage in one of his letters to Frau Katharina Schratt tells of his trepidation when his mother-in-law brought a lady-in-waiting who was not only the daughter of a poet but an authoress herself, and

his relief when he found her "very cheerful and natural, ready to talk about anything.") It may well be that his beautiful consort, the Empress Elisabeth, who had all the characteristics of the House of Wittelsbach, had made him feel self-conscious about his intellectual inferiority. Had she played her allotted part at Court, she might have set a different tone in Austrian society, but she alienated its sympathies by the fact of her continued absence from the capital, and it is possible that her unpopularity was indirectly responsible for the disfavour in which all high-brow activities came to be held.

There were some notable exceptions to prove the rule. I remember Princess Pauline Metternich, who had been the wife of the Austrian Ambassador in Paris during the Second Empire and had helped to have Wagner's *Tannhäuser* performed there; Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe, whose name will for ever be associated with Rainer Maria Rilke's Duino Elegies; Countess Misa Wydenbruck-Esterhazy, who used to entertain everybody of note in the contemporary musical world. Society smiled indulgently at the vagaries of these ladies, saying that "they liked to surround themselves with jugglers and jesters."

The situation of literature in Austria was influenced by the fact that, until after the First World War, her authors and poets were dependent on the great German publishers, foremost the Insel-Verlag and S. Fischer, to bring their work before the public. There was not one Austrian publisher of note concerned with *belles lettres*; and the country did not produce the kind of fiction that would sell. There were hardly any novelists who could have described the contemporary scene, including the life of the upper classes (which is, after all, what those who read novels for amusement and relaxation want to read about). Writers were not in society, and society produced no writers. I remember my mother saying that one could not possibly read German novels, they were so terribly *von daneben*, and we satisfied our appetite for fiction exclusively with English and French novels.

Admittedly, it needed great mastery to write dialogue (which infuses life into the novel) convincingly in the old Austria. Hofmannsthal, that great artist, is one of the few writers who succeeded in creating a perfect *pastiche* of Austrian "*Aristokratendeutsch*," both in the libretto of *Der Rosenkavalier* and the comedy *Der Schwierige*. The difference between the high German of the schools and the spoken vernacular was so great that the average Austrian society woman wrote English and French with far greater ease than German. Even Princess Marie Taxis, highly cultured and well educated though she was, wrote her reminiscences and a novel

in French, finding difficulty in expressing herself in what was, after all, her own language. Admittedly, it is more difficult to write well in German than in any other European language, and to make matters worse, the rules of orthography had been changed in 1900, and conservative people refused to conform to the new rules.

On the whole, men had a decided advantage over women, owing to the fact that most of them were taught Latin, which helped them to master German grammar. The education of the Austrian "*Comtesse*" (as an unmarried *Gräfin* was called officially) was extremely scanty and one-sided. It was quite unheard-of for her to go to college or university, or attempt to earn her own living in any way. There were only two careers open to her—marriage or religion. As no unmarried girl could venture abroad unaccompanied, those who remained spinsters after attaining their majority (which they did at the age of twenty-four) tried to attain the status of a married woman by becoming a *Stiftsdame* or canoness, which entailed passing a rigorous pedigree-test and residing for three months of the year in one of the houses founded and endowed in the 17th century.

It needed two world wars and a revolution to break down these medieval prejudices. When the 1914 war broke out, many *Comtessen* who were of age took up nursing in the Red Cross, and I remember the curious anomaly of a friend several years older than myself, going with her cousin to live and work in a hospital in a provincial town, accompanied by a ladies' maid. The two volunteer nurses scrubbed floors and emptied slops at the hospital all day long, and then retired to their quarters to be undressed and put to bed by their maid, who darned their stockings, cleaned their shoes, and washed their clothes—besides exercising the indispensable, though wholly theoretical function of a chaperon.

The war and Austria as we had known it, came to an end in 1918. The Empire was disrupted, and all that was left of a realm comprising eleven nationalities and numbering 50 million inhabitants was Vienna with two million citizens, and a mainly rustic population of four million in the German-speaking home counties with their mountains, lakes, and forests. Hungary with her vast estates of farm-land, her cattle- and horse-breeders, had become a separate kingdom; the shipyards on the Adriatic seaboard and the vineyards of South Tyrol were lost to Italy; the agricultural and industrial wealth of Bohemia and Moravia now belonged to the Republic of Czechoslovakia; the coal-mines of Silesia and Galicia were absorbed by Poland;

Slavonia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosnia, and the Herzegovina were joined to Serbia in the new kingdom of Yugoslavia. . . .

The immediate result of all this was the total impoverishment of all Austrians, with the exception of the big land-owners, most of whom now became citizens of the new republics and kingdoms. The army had become redundant, the Court had ceased to exist, all titles of nobility were officially abolished (though they never ceased to be used unofficially). The new Austrian republican government continued to pay the pensions of all officers and civil servants, but inflation set in and soon rose to fantastic heights—until a new currency, the schilling, came to replace the krone at the rate of 10,000 to one.

People who had never known the value of money before and would never have dreamed of earning it by their own efforts began to turn their accomplishments to account—painting, embroidering, decorating, sewing. Gradually, tourists discovered Austria and everybody who had spare rooms started taking in paying guests. This assumed such proportions that Czernin could write in *This Salzburg*: "My *Gräfin* is not an exact translation of my landlady." Many of the younger scions of the nobility emigrated—to South America, to Mexico, to Canada. Now that the army and the church no longer absorbed the majority of younger sons, bearers of the most ancient names began to take up professions, as they had been doing in England for the last hundred years. Certain prejudices still existed, among them that expressed by the dictum "*Pecunia olet*": thus it was more admissible to become an architect than a banker, an engineer than a merchant.

Up to the thirties, society girls were still chaperoned, then they also became independent. The lack of financial security gradually did away with the strict adherence to the old prejudices, and it became usual for members of the pedigree-conscious caste to intermarry with mortals who could not boast sixteen quarterings. Girls were allowed to study at college and university, and today it has become natural for them to earn their living by their brains or by doing domestic chores abroad.

The linguistic peculiarities which were so characteristic of Austria still survive, but they are gradually disappearing among the young people in their twenties, just as the old prejudices and the old arrogance are being forgotten and will be replaced by other prejudices and a new kind of arrogance.

NORA WYDENBRUCK

London, W.14

Comment

“The Middle Generation”

I SHOULD like to submit to your readers some observations on “The Middle Generation,” as a useful supplement to your articles on “The Younger Generation.” The excuse for this brief, interim survey of middle age is the anxiety felt in certain younger quarters about the characteristics of the contemporary middle-aged that have been noted by several of us who are in the habit of visiting espresso bars; the occasion of it is the rash of enquiry into “youth” by those who have left it behind.

The difficulty of accruing data of a relevant kind in this matter is indeed a hard one. As has been pointed out in a previous issue of *ENCOUNTER*, the middle-aged do not frequent espresso bars. Yet though this constitutes an important obstacle for the youthful investigator it does, in fact, shed light on the middle-aged character. Contrary to what might be supposed, the absence of the middle generation from our coffee bars is not because it might feel a trifle self-conscious if present at occasions of youthful leisure. It is because our middle-aged tend to be alcoholic and, in any case, don't like coffee. Again, youth might be forgiven in assuming that in this case the middle generation is to be found (and observed) seated in pubs. But in fact it is only to be found in private gardens during the summer months and amid Regency chintz in the winter. The pubs are closing down as there are not enough of the *old* aged to keep them open.

To the best of my knowledge there is not, as yet, such a thing as a “‘Milky Bar’ Research Grant into Middle-Aged Delinquency” and therefore the business of mass observation of the middle-aged in their islands of privacy tends to be complicated by lack of funds. But as with “youth” so with other age categories: a very little can surely be made to go a long long way. . . . It is this that I hope to demonstrate.

FROM street observation, office interviews, and the occasional domestic encounter; from the examination of theatre stalls, during the interval (one has to be quick as the whole generation packs the crush-bar), the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy, and the odd forage into the gloomy interiors of the sterner and older clubs,

an accurate composite picture can be built up of today's middle-aged man. (And for the purpose of this report that includes women too, as there is no differentiation between the sexes on the part of those who have already set the precedent for these “age-group” investigations.)

From the sources mentioned we can quickly establish the look of tomorrow's ancient. He is altogether grey. Grey suits are worn to accompany a substantial amount of grey hair (baldness being rare) and the quality of greyness is enhanced by the thick, woolly material of the costume worn and the presence of a completely buttoned waistcoat. The waistcoat is the same colour as the suit (tailors of the middle-age group invariably provide “three-piece” suits), and is displayed prominently by the simple expedient of always leaving the outer jacket unbuttoned. This creates a “flappy” impression which is frequently furthered by the wearing of one pocket flap out and the other in. The middle-aged are clean-shaven and have much redder faces than the young—the result of alcoholism and the straining after causes when they were young. They smoke cigarettes from cigarette cases, fumble with lighters, and find it very hard to talk with the young. They are, indeed, very nervous, enjoying psychiatrists, physicians, and a succession of wives, all in great numbers. They are rarely at ease outside their homes (where they spend most of the time), yet are only really afraid of two things: youth and religion. They enjoy politics and resent income tax; ignore the Third Programme and criss-cross their shoe-laces. All in all, the habits of the middle generation are simple. When they are not in their homes talking about horticulture, farming, or the other middle-aged, they are “getting to know” England. This latter activity is the result of their all having lived in Europe before the war when they spoke German or Italian. None of them speak French. Many of our middle-aged belong to a kind of pen club called “autobiographies.” This way they send messages to their friends and enemies and become very excited. These autobiographies represent what might be called a literary “wearing of the jeans” and they reveal to us that the middle generation experienced two kinds of childhood: the halcyon and the grim. No middle-ager had a normal childhood, and though he detested his

schooling, he enjoyed his university (of which there were then only two).

The age group is generally keen on causes—though this must result from a preconditioning as it no longer actually embraces them. It believes in innocence, swoons at naïvety, and is proud of its colossal ignorance of technical matters. Observation indicates that “second childhood” is *anticipated* with our present middle generation and it certainly shows remarkable proficiency with bucket and spade—even amateur observers can study middle-agers doing this at almost any English beach during the summer months.

The social cement of our middle-aged is a commodity which they passionately treasure described as “good taste.” They dislike economic democracy (now that it has arrived) and are confused by social categories based on such norms as car horse-power and the “12,” “14,” or “21” television screen groupings. “Good taste” sometimes expresses itself in curious ways, for example, when one of their number dies the rest are assiduous at attending the funeral, but weddings, on the other hand, tend to go by default. The basic inconsistency of the middle generation is its *wholehearted* subscription to what it refuses to acknowledge as the Establishment. But this matter is a sore point with the age group and might even engender violence if produced as a tea-time topic. (This is by way of a warning to future investigators and research students.) It should also be remembered by youthful interviewers that while the middle-ager sometimes feels young and sometimes feels old, he never, under any circumstances, feels middle-aged. . . . Not even an interim report on the middle generation would be complete without reference to the problems of the *younger* middle-aged. These are the people that still talk about the last war and nurse a psychological *horrendum* over the use of the cliché. Most of them work for the BBC, drink beer, and read and write books on criticism instead of autobiographies. They are the most unhappy of the middle-aged because they don’t “belong” anywhere any more. They are not interested in farming and find themselves unable to read anything but *The Times*. For this section of the middle generation it is suggested that middle-age clubs be formed—to be run and supervised by “youth” who can tell them all about it. (For this category was never young owing to *The Crisis* and *The War*.) Clubs would also compensate them for not believing in Freud and for still trying to be humanists. They might be described as our “crazy mixed-up middle-aged” and should properly be regarded as a burden on the nation’s conscience.

This leads me, naturally, to the problems of

middle-age delinquency. The greatest crime of the middle generation is detraction of its members by one another. A possible solution is fines for malicious gossip—as the category tends to be more responsive to monetary discipline than to imprisonment. But perhaps there is need of a Royal Commission to investigate the whole question. This is, in fact, strongly recommended.

I should like to make passing mention of the “break-away” types of the middle generation. These are they who do not really believe that they *belong* with their age group. They are, if anything, more *s-e-n-s-i-t-i-v-e* than the rest; (though sensitivity is a hall mark of our middle-aged in any case). These then are the real “problem men” of our time and are most in need of the counsel and help of the old and young. They are unmarried and play tennis. They are also interested in the problems of other age-categories, especially those of youth.

There remains only the question of the future. It is an indubitable fact that today’s middle-aged are tomorrow’s old, and I trust that it is apparent from this brief and interim report that there are good reasons for grave apprehension over our future old. Let us not forget that many of them will soon be knights (if they are not seated in the House of Lords); that they will be sitting on Commissions and having their lives serialised in the London evening papers. And, whether we like it or not, they are “ours”—we can swop them with no others. At the moment, we are told “they may feel pity” for the young. Our task is to see that this healthy attitude is increased and that they do not degenerate into feeling pity only for themselves.

DAVID WATMOUGH

London, W.11

A Post-Christian Epoch?

I HAVE read with great interest both the article of Mr. Philip Sherrard on “A Post-Christian Epoch?” (February 1956) and the comments which that article has inspired in your May issue.

In the opening paragraph to his remarks, Father D’Arcy writes of Mr. Sherrard’s proposed “alternative version of the Christian religion” that “it will not be unfamiliar to those acquainted with the writings of René Guénon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Aldous Huxley, and others.”

Of the works of Ananda Coomaraswamy, I can unfortunately claim no knowledge, but I am fairly well acquainted with those of both Guénon and Huxley (as indeed many people are), and I cannot help feeling that it is a little

misleading when Father D'Arcy puts these two writers together in the same basket, for so he appears to do.

Aldous Huxley must be better known in this country than René Guénon, most of whose writings have not yet been translated into English and are not always easily available in their original French version.

The seventh chapter of Guénon's *Initiation et Réalisation Spirituelle*, published in Paris in 1952 by Les Editions Traditionnelles, is headed "Nécessité de l'Exotérisme Traditionnel." It opens as follows:

Beaucoup semblent douter de la nécessité, pour qui aspire à l'initiation, de se rattacher tout d'abord à une forme traditionnelle d'ordre exotérique et d'en observer les prescriptions. . . . Il est admissible qu'un exotériste ignore l'ésotérisme . . . ; mais, par contre, il ne l'est pas que quiconque a des prétentions à l'ésotérisme veuille ignorer l'exotérisme, ne fût-ce que pratiquement, car le "plus" doit forcément comprendre le "moins." (Page 59.)

Thus, for Guénon, at least, Faith is not just "a cheap ticket of admission to the gallery." For it, the same price must be paid by all, without it no participation in the "mysteries" is possible at any level, and it presumably admits to any part of the "auditorium."

It is true that a little earlier in the same book, in the course of the fifth chapter entitled "*A propos du rattachement initiatique*" (page 45) Guénon admits the possibility of very rare exceptions to this "rule" which requires any candidate for "initiation" to adhere to a traditional exoteric religious organisation. But this does not change his fundamental position. For Guénon, indeed (if one may paraphrase Professor Trypanis), "dogma" and "genuine initiation" are not only "not incompatible": they are, in a sense, inseparable.

L. JAPOLSKY

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WHILE agreeing with Father D'Arcy that my article "A Post-Christian Epoch?" was in certain respects hasty and erratic, I still think that in answering it he might have taken more trouble not to misrepresent the issue it discusses. It is very easy to say that to speak of what St. Augustine calls "Wisdom uncreate, the same now as it ever was" and to point to an absolute distinction between the intellect and the reason both as regards their function and their mode

of knowledge, is to subscribe to a Gnosticism fundamentally opposed to the spirit of Christianity, since Christianity embraces history and the human condition, while Gnosticism does not, and so on; and no doubt if one begins with certain preconceived assumptions that is what one is bound to say. But the issue in question is not whether the Church has had to reject the teachings of various Gnostic sects of a more or less dubious character, but why Western ecclesiastical authority has been led virtually to suppress the genuine intellectual or "gnostic" aspects of the Christian tradition, aspects which do not involve a denial of the historical and human, *incarnational*, side of the Christian religion, but rather complete and consummate it, and, moreover, are fully recognised not only by such Christian Fathers as those I mentioned in my article, but also by East Christian spiritual masters in general, from a St. Basil or a St. Maximus down to (to limit oneself to the Middle Ages) a St. Symeon the Younger or a St. Gregory Palamas. It is this which Father D'Arcy seems unwilling to recognise or to answer.

Of course Christianity "claims to reject nothing human," and of course it is an historical religion, and of course at its heart is the truth of the Word made flesh. But equally of course it rejects nothing superhuman, and the reality of its mysteries are not only revealed in time, but are also extra-temporal and extra-historical, and if the Word is made flesh, the flesh is also made the Word. To say that these things are merely "a matter of emphasis, one aspect of the doctrine appealing more than others owing to the conditions of the times," is tantamount to saying that the doctrine is a sort of relative affair and that its truth can in some way be split up according to individual likes and dislikes dependent on contingent and subjective circumstances. It is not the exoteric activities and interest in secular civilisation *in themselves* which have compromised Christianity, but the allowing of these aspects to take precedence over, and to eclipse, the teachings and practices of the intellectual and esoteric aspects of the Christian tradition, even to the point of refusing to recognise their existence and of explicitly waging war on them. Representatives of the Church may go on making this refusal and waging this war if they like, but they will in so doing contribute to precisely that spiritual stagnation which it is the purpose of the Church itself to overcome.

PHILIP SHERRARD

Athens, Greece

BOOKS

Lack of Confidence

MR. EDMUND WILSON'S *The Shock of Recognition** takes its title from a magnificent image of Melville:

For genius, all over the world, stands hand in hand, and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round.

But his target is, mercifully, less wide than this might be taken to imply. He is concerned with America, not "the world." *The Shock of Recognition* is, in his own words, "an attempt to present a chronicle of the progress of literature in the United States as one finds it recorded by those who had some part in creating that literature": or, in other words, a collection of documents concerning the impact of the principal American creative writers on each other—excluding all general discussions, excluding all critics who were primarily such.

The resulting paunchy 1,290-page octavo may sound expensive, but it is not, considering that it contains reprints of half-a-dozen full-length books and many essays and articles, almost all of them out of print for a century or so, or obtainable only in garbled or "edited" versions. For the Americanist, *The Shock of Recognition* is indispensable, as a glance at a few of the contents will show: Lowell's *Fable for Critics*; the whole of Poe's criticism; Melville's eloquent and compassionate essay on Hawthorne; a fascinating series of documents on the Emerson-Whitman axis; Bayard Taylor's provincial-shrewd collection of parodies, *Diversions of the Echo Club*; James's early monograph on Hawthorne; Twain's rollicking attack on Fenimore Cooper; the whole of D. H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*, repository of the profoundest and of the silliest things ever said on the subject by anyone, anywhere—this last being one of Mr. Wilson's few exceptions to his rule of limiting himself to purely American commentators. And all these are reprinted in

their entirety, with a minimum of editorial comment and introduction.

About so widely heterogeneous a compilation, clearly I can say nothing beyond that it is entirely absorbing and that, though necessarily put together in an arbitrary and personal way, it has nevertheless succeeded in finding its own unity. I shall limit myself to a single *minutia* therefore, out of the hundred others I might have chosen: the metrical criticisms of Poe.

Of all men of genius turned critic, Poe (one may suppose) was the most unpleasant and often the least illuminating—except about himself: as Mr. Wilson acutely remarks:

[these essays] *are neurotic as all Poe's work is neurotic, and the distortions do here sometimes throw us off as they do not in the stories, because it is here a question of judgment, whereas in his fiction the distortion itself is the subject of the story.*

His laceration of William Ellery Channing, in particular, emerges in a sort of meaningless high-pitched scream that sets the teeth on edge like something heard over an asylum wall: he savages his victim's romance-and-water sensibility in the familiar manner of a Quarterly Reviewer settling a Keats. When he turns his attention to Channing's metric however, our emotional indignation is (or *should* be) changed to something more purely logical:

It would be quite a pleasure to hear him read or scan, or to hear anybody else read or scan, such a line as this, at page 3, for example:

"Masculine almost though softly carved in grace";

or this, at page 56:

"Harsh action even in repose inwardly harsh";

or this, at page 138:

"Like the swift petrel, mimicking the wave's measure."

Well, I for one can oblige Mr. Poe, if he cares to visit me in the form of raven or otherwise.

**The Shock of Recognition*. Edited by EDMUND WILSON. W. H. Allen. 45s.

The second example, especially, is purely Miltonic, and if he cares to fault that, the whole of *Paradise Lost* goes with it. But Poe's Wee-Free tum-ti-tum dogmatism goes further:

In place of "unheard" he writes "unheard"; as thus, at page 47:

"Or think, though unheard, that your sphere is dumb."

In place of "perchance" he writes "perchance"; as at page 71:

"When perchance sorrow with her icy smile."

Now this is the sheerest illiteracy and it is no surprise to find Poe in an earlier essay pontificating about Longfellow's hexameters in complete ignorance of the meaning of the word "cæsura." Mr. Wilson, however, who considers this "surely . . . the most remarkable body of criticism ever produced in the United States," is a little puzzled and pained at Henry James's entirely just comment: "probably the most complete and exquisite specimen of *provincialism* ever prepared for the edification of men." He is shocked at Emerson ("Poe? Poe? Oh, *you mean the jingle-man!*"), and mutters darkly of "the lurking rancor of New England" without pausing to consider that criticism of Poe's ill-informed virulence would evoke rancour from a butter-pat. Yet *jingle-man* is an epithet richly asked for both by Poe the metrical critic and by Poe the poet—on whose verses these pronouncements of the critic throw so much light! And how sane and balanced is Emerson's judgment on Channing beside that of Poe:

Ellery Channing's poetry has the merit of being genuine, and not the metrical commonplace of the magazines, but it is painfully incomplete.

This is just: even the few lines quoted by Poe for the purpose of derision, show Channing to have possessed a delicate natural ear, if no architectonic power.

My quarrel with Mr. Wilson is that he says none of this, is unaware apparently that it needs to be said: when a man's criticism is crude, gross, pompous, and inaccurate, it is less than valuable to go waffling on about his "first-rate mind." I, at any rate, feel that uncomfortable lack of confidence in Mr. Wilson which comes from finding that a man is not shocked when he should be. If I lay stress on it in this single instance, it is of course because Mr. Wilson in general is eminently sane, balanced, and reliable: in any case, *The Shock of Recognition* provides such a tremendous amount of material for cerebration that there would be something wrong if one did not quarrel with its compiler and editor at some point or another.

I ALSO chose this particular example because of the special kind of lack of confidence I spoke of—the being shocked at the not being shocked—has so strong a bearing on the relations between reader and novelist. In the 19th century we knew where we were. The novelist did not necessarily preach, but he let us understand clearly which characters he approved of, and which not. Now, the ideal of detachment, probably a good one, has been extended into a sort of obligation to fail to judge, which is a different matter altogether. Time and again the reader, disliking a character heartily, and assuming that the author is with him, is suddenly brought up short by the horrid doubt (which the author has no business to leave him room for) whether he is not in fact alone.

I got this sensation very strongly from Miss Mary McCarthy's *A Charmed Life**—indeed this perverse suspension of proper judgment is more an American than a British thing. Miss McCarthy takes a whimsy-whamsy New England "artists' colony," which she calls "New Leeds"—something much like the St. Ives circus in this country (peace to the writers of all the eccentrically abusive notes that will flap about my editors' ears for my saying it!)—if one can call it a circus where the clowns all fancy they are Hamlet, and there are no lions, seals, or horses, and the solitary sword-swallower has permanent hiccups: a target twice as broad as a barn door, which it must all the same be acknowledged that Miss McCarthy hits plumb in the middle. It is beautifully done; provided one thinks it worth doing. The revealing incidents are admirably chosen, the follies are laid bare to perfection. "Quite possibly the cleverest writer the U.S. has ever produced," says *Time*, though I dare say Mr. Wilson would not be wholly with them. For myself, I should say "Clever, yes, but only in the accusing sense—smart, glossy, barrenly intellectual." And even on this level, I should avoid a superlative. The discussions on Racine, for instance, are well enough in an honours-graduate sort of way; but if one compares *A Charmed Life* with, say, *Tarr* (where Wyndham Lewis is similarly attacking an artists' milieu, but one that is a more demanding target), one sees at once the difference between a bright student and a *really* "first-rate mind"—of the sort that Poe hadn't got, and Miss McCarthy hasn't either.

The "artists" in *A Charmed Life* are mostly mildly sympathetic but hopelessly incompetent, with no chance of producing any sort of a work of art on any sort of level. The hero and heroine are equally incompetent, but (for me, though

* *A Charmed Life*. By MARY MCCARTHY. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 15s.

not, I suspect, for Miss McCarthy) not equally sympathetic. The heroine Martha is particularly not nice: amoral in a purely negative way so that her decisions, one way or the other, cannot possibly interest—a pity, since the latter half of the book is practically devoted to them. Will she have the abortion, or will she not? We couldn't care less, because he, she, it, they, have become entirely meaningless to us. These characters seem to lack precisely that central core of judgment, belief, standards, which makes men human as well as men. As for lack of confidence:

[Martha is in the process of being raped by her ex-husband.] *He heard Martha laugh faintly as she pushed his head away from her. The humour of it was beginning to dawn on her, evidently. She was too ironic a girl not to see that once, more or less, could not make much difference, when she had already laid it on the line for him about five hundred times.*

In other words, the fact that you have divorced a first husband whom you hate, and married a second one whom you love, should not preclude you from making love to the first one should he demand it. But whose belief is it? Martha's? The ex-husband's? Miss McCarthy's? We simply do not know, and I entirely doubt whether Miss McCarthy does either.

I am afraid this struck me as a sordid and truthless book.

MR. ANGUS WILSON'S *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes** is brilliantly everything that Miss McCarthy's ought to be and is not: it is indeed, so far as I am concerned, the book of the year to date. The reference of the title is three-fold. First, of course, to Lewis Carroll, that master-key to the complex sadness behind the gay doors of English eccentricity. Secondly, to the main incident of the book, the discovery (actually forty years before the story opens) of the tomb of the early Saxon convert and missionary Eorpwald—and in it a heathen Teutonic idol of unmistakably phallic import. Thirdly, the peculiarly English ways in which the protagonists react to, or are involved in, this event; particularly the moral doubts and hesitations with which Professor Gerald Middleton, the hero, faces increasing suspicions that the whole business is a second "Piltdown Man"—torn between his duty to accurate historical scholarship and his realisation of the effects of a revealed fraud upon the children and survivors of its original perpetrators. That is one of Gerald

* *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*. By ANGUS WILSON. Secker and Warburg. 15s.

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Middleton's problems: the other is the achieving of some sort of valid relationship with his family—his saccharine, life-worshipping blonde Dane of a wife, from whom he is separated; his three extremely difficult children. In this he largely fails. Yet we feel that he has made the effort in such a way as to free him from further guilt or responsibility; that he will be henceforth, though lonely, for the first time his own. Middleton is a complicated, highly intelligent, and fundamentally likeable character, if cold on the surface, and Mr. Wilson is to be congratulated on him.

The author has drawn on his experiences as Deputy Superintendent of the British Museum Reading Room to construct a remarkably authentic and authoritative world of archæologists and historians. But his scope is far wider than this, genuinely Dickensian in its sweep and variety. There is, for instance, another world of working-class homosexuality, presided over by a Dostoevskian philanthropist as much beyond Miss McCarthy's moral range in one direction as Mr. Wilson's terrifyingly convincing juvenile delinquents are in the other. *Anglo-Saxon Atti-*

tudes is a considerable achievement and, amongst other things, a "contemporary" novel in the full and accurate sense of the word—concerned, yes, with junior provincial lecturers and Espresso bars, in their proper and not very important places, but also with a very large number of the other types and classes of whom this post-war England is composed. Recommended unreservedly.

ALSO RECOMMENDED: Mr. W. John Morgan's *The Small World* (Gollancz. 12s. 6d.) is an innocuous and rather funny first novel about (mostly) university life in what I take to be Cardiff.

G. Bernard Shaw's *Advice to a Young Critic* (Peter Owen. 16s.)—principally Shaw's unpublished correspondence with R. E. Golding Bright, the dramatic agent and critic—appears in good time for the centenary on July 26th. Not of outstanding importance to the non-Shavian, but good examples of Shaw's brilliant clarity of style even in casual correspondence, and obviously indispensable to the student of theatre history.

Hilary Corke

AMERICAN TRENDS

LIKE most of my contemporaries I pride myself on being alert to trends. There are so many of them and they make life so interesting. It is as though we were small boys, keen on train-spotting, and all lived at Crewe. Trends are the great consolation for living in a time of acute unrest. There is always something new out of Africa and Asia and Europe and America. . . .

I wonder, then, why I have not responded more readily to Professor C. Wright Mills's latest piece of American trend-spotting.* In part, no doubt, because his conclusions are gloomy; if they are also true, the consequences are fearful for us all. And, less fundamentally, because his book is sociological in cast. I do not mean to make the usual frivolous objection to sociological "jargon," as reviewers irritably style it. Some of my best friends are sociologists, and I admire them enormously. But there is perhaps an ambiguity in most sociological study. If the individual investigation is accurate and crisp, it is usually of limited scope. It is descriptive rather than

analytical. Where it is more ambitiously analytical, then it approaches guesswork—valuable if intelligent, dubious if not intelligent, but still guesswork in the perfectly acceptable sense in which a novel or a poem might be called guesswork. In such cases we are apt (though not invariably) to feel that something is being put over on us. Sociology can become a credential, a detective's card displayed in the palm, the excuse for a heavily knowing air: a mechanism to enable the author to maintain an attitude of scornful detachment, like those heroes of mythology who with the aid of a talisman pass unscathed through horror and danger. The sociological talisman is a matter of terminology and citation. Mr. Mills's book is, accordingly, full of "models" and "legitimations," and it is driven from the rear by a fifty-page block of notes. He strikes the reader as a sort of Philip Marlowe of American sociology.

Having voiced this grumble, one should at once praise Mr. Mills for being ambitious, and for attempting to supply a comprehensive explanation for a number of seemingly disparate American trends. We are all more or less aware that there are class distinctions in the

* *The Power Elite*. By C. WRIGHT MILLS. Oxford University Press. London: Cumberlege. 36s.

United States; that the "cash-nexus" as a quantitative standard of value is pervasive; that there is a strong pressure to conform; that a vicious apathy is latent in the behaviour of the mass-society; that some writers are advocating a "New Conservatism" (winsomely yet querulously proposed by Mr. Russell Kirk, rather more robustly defined in Mr. Clinton Rossiter's *Conservatism in America*); that present prosperity is bound up with the Cold War economy; and that the Cold War has created an atmosphere of nervous suspicion, in which military leadership and prodigious expenditure are novel and alarming features.

ALL these elements are drawn together in Mr. Mills's thesis. He believes that power in America—the power that counts—is in the hands of an élite which is centralised, wealthy, unified, and essentially mindless. Its conception of "reality" is military: "Peace is no longer serious; only war is serious. Every man and every nation is either friend or foe, and the idea of enmity becomes mechanical, massive, and without genuine passion." Its members are the heads of great corporations; the "war-lords" of the armed forces; and the "political directorate" which occupies the principal executive positions in government. These groups are, he asserts, largely self-contained and interchangeable. Those who belong are predominantly old-stock, Protestant Americans. They think alike, send their sons to the same Eastern prep schools and colleges, and are themselves increasingly the product of the same privileged environment. They inherit their wealth, and bequeath it intact or augmented. The myth of America as an open society persists: the truth, Mr. Mills tries to show, is that a relatively small clique is in power, and is perpetuating its power, with only minimal recruitment from outside. The corporation heads enter government at the top level, without previous political experience; they and the "war-lords" occupy senior diplomatic posts; the "war-lords," on retirement, join the boards of the great corporations.

At the bottom lies the amorphous mass-society, incapable of challenging, or even understanding, the decisions that are reached on high: the helpless recipient of information fed to it by the élite's public-relations experts. In between comes the middle class, which is likewise—though less blatantly—excluded from effective power: the middling businessmen, who cannot compete with the corporations; the labour unions, whose leaders' authority is limited to trivial gains; the professional groups, many of whom have lost status; and the politicians, once powerful but who no longer reach the upper levels of prestige and patronage.

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Mr. Mills does not say that what has happened is the result of a conspiracy. But he insists that it *has* happened, is a Bad Thing, and will apparently continue to happen. He has little patience with other trend-spotters. Thus, Mr. Riesman and Mr. Daniel Boorstin are presented (like the New Conservatives) as unconscious dupes; having failed to realise that the power élite exists, they praise and recommend in a vacuum. Those political theorists who speak of a balance of interests are also challenged; such a balance, Mr. Mills tells them, is an ancient fable. Economists such as Professor Galbraith are likewise far from the mark when they develop notions of a countervailing power. In short, Mr. Mills's thesis has the useful merit (for his purposes) of explaining everything and condoning nothing.

I DISAGREE with him, though I feel that this is a worthwhile book, if only for the anger and protestations of innocence that it will arouse. It is a recognisable and well-documented if not entirely just description of current America. The rich do have a considerable say in affairs; and I think Mr. Mills proves that there has been some hardening of social mobility

at the top. The military also are at the centre of things, as the covers of *Time* magazine frequently reveal (though "war-lords" is surely a somewhat loaded term for a sociologist to employ?). The mass-society does exhibit a dismaying intellectual squalor. The prospect of the Cold War is not exhilarating, as I, if not the first, will not be the last to admit.

But taken as a whole his thesis is not convincing. He outlines a glossy American-type 1984 and says this is it: 1956. It could become that; some of the signs point that way. But American trends, even more than those of other countries, have a habit of changing direction. There are ruling groups in America, and they exhibit certain characteristics. But there are ruling groups in every country; and it could be argued that America is maturing as a nation, instead of going rotten, when it begins to formulate a little more clearly the pattern of a ruling class. Leaving aside that question, however, one must still feel that by comparison with Europe the United States is far from possessing a "power élite." A recession, or a mitigation of the Cold War, could still quite sharply change the ruling structure of America. The intellectuals are less alienated and undervalued than Mr. Mills seems to state (or does he believe that they *should* remain alienated?). Local and regional ties are stronger, and more comforting, than he would allow. Congress is not down for the count, even if it failed to pass the Bricker Amendment. The communications media are not altogether lickspittle, as Mr. Mills's quotations from James Reston or Walter Lippmann

might have led him to note. Indeed, never have so many been downtrodden so luxuriously.

Nor, I think, is the military ascendancy as firm and integrated as Mr. Mills contends. Regular army and navy officers do resemble corporation heads in their Protestant conservatism of outlook. But if they have power at the moment, they do not yet have wealth. Many come from plain homes (Dwight Eisenhower and Omar Bradley are examples); and so far, their children marry into the services rather than the corporations. If they mingle easily with civilian leaders, part of the reason is that they have retained many civilian attributes, including civilian physiognomies (and, incidentally, they have often been mixed up with politics in the past, during and after wars: there is no sinister novelty here). Some join boards of directors, on retirement. Why not?—even honorific rewards have been scarce hitherto. Some corporation heads have become generals, but only baby ones and only under war conditions. There is no certainty (thank heaven) that the present necessity for a grandiose military establishment will continue, nor that its ways of thought have triumphed over quieter counsels. There is no universal military training in America, and no universal military ethos, either in Mr. Eisenhower's mind or (despite what Mr. Mills implies) among the churches.

I have said enough to indicate that this is a cantankerous, ingenious, earnest book, in which prediction is offered as depiction. Mr. Mills hears the sabres rattle; to me the sound is a bit like that of the trains clanking through Crewe.

Marcus Cunliffe

PRIMITIVE LENINISM

TO WHAT extent is the "Leninist revival" in the Soviet Union a true return to the Communist beliefs of forty or thirty-five years ago? There is evidently a new confidence in the pursuit of the original goal of "world revolution": the present Soviet leaders no longer share Stalin's fear of any revolutionary movement that might seize power without direct Soviet assistance, and are prepared to grant the foreign Communist parties greater tactical independence in exploring the roads to power which might appear most promising in their national conditions. But is the new Leninism really comparable to the old one—or has it only become possible because Communist parties throughout the world have been so thoroughly assimilated to the Soviet model in the intervening, "Stalinist," epoch?

Nothing could remind us more forcefully of

the gulf that separates the 1956 variety of "Leninism" from the original than the first volume of Comintern documents, just edited for Chatham House by Mrs. Jane Degras.* It covers the period from the Comintern's foundation to the fourth world congress—the last one attended by Lenin. Prepared with the scholarship and selected with the sense of historical relevance familiar to students of Mrs. Degras's edition of *Documents on Soviet Foreign Policy*, it condenses in a single volume all the decisive evidence of what the original Leninism really was like in the international field—and why it failed so thoroughly.

* *The Communist International: Documents. Volume I: 1919-1922.* Oxford University Press. 55s.

Basically, the story told by these documents is that of a tragic misunderstanding—the historical misunderstanding which led to the union of the revolutionary minorities within the Western Labour movement with Lenin's Bolshevik Party in a new International. In a Europe torn by the First World War, the Russian revolution had aroused tremendous hopes; the first act of the victorious Bolsheviks had been an appeal to all the peoples for immediate peace, and when they actually concluded an armistice with Imperial Germany at the price of severe territorial sacrifices, they kindled a new faith in the internationalist anti-war groups of socialists everywhere, many of whom had already met the Bolshevik exiles at conferences during the war. To the revolutionary Marxists and Syndicalists of Europe, the events in poor and backward Russia appeared as the fulfilment of their own dreams of a truly proletarian revolution. Were not the Soviets the origins of "dictatorship of the proletariat" as defined by Marx—the organs for the direct rule of the immense majority of working men and women over the minority of the exploiters, with perfect democracy within the ranks of the toilers? Was this not the "free association of the producers" for administering their common affairs without a bureaucratic state machine and deceitful politicians of which the Latin syndicalists had dreamt? The Bolshevik revolution thus appeared as the latest of the great democratic revolutions of Europe—but this time with the working class and not the bourgeoisie victoriously in the van.

Yet in fact the power of the Soviets had only been a passing phase in the Russian revolution, to be quickly superseded by the rule of the Bolshevik Party. That party, created in the underground struggle against Tsarism, was of a type unknown in Western and Central Europe—a centralised instrument for seizing and keeping power, controlled from the top, with all initiative in the hands of the leadership; and it quickly proceeded to build up a more powerful state machine than Russia had ever known, and to establish its permanent monopoly or organisation and propaganda. What had begun as the last of the democratic popular revolutions of Europe thus turned into the first of the totalitarian revolutions of the 20th century.

BUT if the revolutionary Marxists and Syndicalists of the West were attracted to the Bolsheviks by a misunderstanding of their true historical rôle, there was a comparable misunderstanding in reverse. For Lenin saw in these courageous anti-war minorities the vanguard whom the huge organised armies of the Western working class were bound to follow. Were not the bulk of the organised workers everywhere

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state rather than from its overthrow.

During the years of the revolutionary post-war crisis, the illusions which had given birth to the Comintern could be maintained without serious doubts on either side. In the summer of 1920, when the Red Army stood at the gates of Warsaw, some of the great mass parties of European labour asked for admission to the Second World Congress of the Comintern. At this point the Bolsheviks, seemingly confirmed in their expectations, decided to "fence in" the true doctrine so that no "treacherous leader" should be able to gatecrash into their fold: the famous Twenty-One Conditions laid down strict rules of international, centralist discipline with which any party would have to conform to obtain admission. Up till then, the split in the international Labour movement had been a by-product of the war, liable to disappear with the end of the post-war crisis. Now it became permanent—thanks to the creation of a permanent institution which transferred the Bolshevik principles of organisation to the international plane. The temporary conflict between a revolutionary and a reformist wing *within* the democratic Labour movement was transformed into the permanent conflict between the democratic Labour movement on one side, and a non-democratic, centralised world party, run by the rulers of the Soviet state, on the other.

bent on the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism? Was not the patriotic or passive attitude of the great social-democratic parties during the war manifest proof of the betrayal of a few, corrupted leaders, whom the masses—apart from a thin privileged stratum of "working-class aristocrats"—would quickly desert as soon as the authentic banner of militant revolutionary socialism was raised again? That belief was indeed the main reason for Lenin's insistence on founding a new Communist International, without the treacherous leaders.

But the belief proved wholly mistaken. The revolutionary minorities of the Western Labour movement were not a vanguard, but a remnant. They represented an heroic tradition that was dying fast—the tradition of a working class which had no democratic rights and no stake in the rapidly growing industrial society. As the franchise broadened and democratic institutions spread from Western to Central Europe, as organised labour learnt to use the machinery of parliamentary legislation and collective bargaining to defend its interests and transform society, the revolutionary impulses of the pre-democratic age weakened in the advanced industrial countries, and the organised workers came more and more to expect the fulfilment of their aspirations from the gradual conquest of the democratic

BUT it took the ebbing of the revolutionary flood, the years of defeat for international Communism and of isolation for Russia, to make this new character of the split visible and to reveal the original misunderstanding. As the Communists of the industrial West failed to seize power, Lenin and his colleagues began to think of their foreign comrades more and more as pupils who must learn from their own successful tactics and methods of organisation; while as the Bolsheviks, forced back from Utopia by isolation, had to grant concessions to peasants, technical specialists, and even to foreign capitalists, the Russia of the New Economic Policy appeared less and less as a natural model to the revolutionary radicals of the Western working class. One by one, the Western Communists of the first hour discovered how little resemblance the Bolshevik dictatorship bore to the proletarian democracy of their dreams, how it was in fact holding the balance between the various classes of Russian society as an independent force based on its control of the state machine; while the Russian leaders in turn realised with dismay that the most gifted Western leaders who had rallied to them in the war and post-war years were not the tough technicians of power, the professional revolutionaries whom they needed, but were infected with

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"petty bourgeois democratic ideas."

As every new defeat of the Western Communist parties led to bitter internal conflicts, with the Russians openly intervening to decide the policies and remove their leaders, this mutual disillusion became manifest. The documents of the early twenties are full of the strange scholastic disputes over the tactics of the "revolutionary offensive" or the "united front" in which these struggles were fought out—disputes which were then conducted in public with remarkable "democratic" frankness, even though the victory of the Russian leaders was always assured in advance. Thus, every year saw some of the outstanding pioneers of Communism in the West break with the Comintern, amidst gloomy warnings that no true revolutionary parties could ever develop under the constant manipulations of Moscow, only negligible sects without roots in the Labour movement of their own countries.

In fact, however, it was the idealistic old Western revolutionaries who gradually faded into sectarian impotence as the main stream of the Labour movement pursued its reformist course, while the Communist parties, led by rootless "*apparachiki*" obedient to Moscow, remained at least a *potential* force, thanks to their

new form of organisation. And as the Fascists and Nazis came to apply the Bolshevik invention of the centralised state-party and the one-party state for their own purposes, Stalin gradually realised what Lenin had never been conscious of—that this instrument of power can rely on different classes in turn, and can also be applied in a parliamentary democracy to seize power by "legal" means. It was in the Popular Front period that Western Communist parties first began to acquire the manoeuvrability—and, as Spain showed, the ruthlessness—of their Fascist opponents. But the full technique for achieving a Communist dictatorship by "legal" means was only applied in Eastern Europe after the Second World War.

What the Moscow twentieth congress has now proclaimed as the new discovery of the "peaceful road to socialism," i.e. to Communist dictatorship, has in fact been Stalin's original contribution to international Communist strategy, though his ungrateful heirs forgot to mention the fact. Their own new step is merely to authorise the application of this method in countries not bordering the Soviet bloc: to that extent, the "Leninist revival" consists in the bolder use of Stalinist techniques of power for Leninist, world-revolutionary aims.

Richard Lowenthal

A PHILOSOPHY FOR LITTLE ENGLAND

"IT is pleasant to record an English victory abroad . . ."—so began a recent report in *The Times* of a football match between English and Finnish teams. I at first assumed this was intended as light irony. But no; it turned out to be just plain insularity. In that same issue, there was a three-inch story, buried at the bottom of the second sports page, on the victory of Sugar Ray Robinson over Bobo Olsen in a fight for the world's middleweight championship. There are still parts of the globe, one knows, where world championships and world records are regarded as real news. Here, absolute performance excites less interest than does the relative performance of an Englishman. Thus the reports in the British press of the Marciano-Cockell fight explained in great detail, and with much maudlin flag-waving, how gallantly Cockell had lost, and rather neglected telling us how Marciano had won—or even that it was a nondescript specimen of a prize-fight, when all was said and done.

The flag, it seems, has followed the empire—

all the way home. One can even say that it has rushed home in undue and precipitate haste. Britain is still considerably more than a little island off the coast of Europe; "Little England" is more a state of mind than a fact. But as a state of mind, it is one of the significant facts about Britain today. It sets the dominant tone for English politics, which avoids the strenuous and seeks contentment in urbane—or should it be suburban?—accommodation. It also characterises the post-war English novel: whatever it is that Lucky Jim wants, it stops short of heaven and this wide world too. And it is the outstanding feature of contemporary British philosophy.

"Love does loathe disdainfull nicetee"—or so Spenser thought. But when one picks up a collection of recent British essays on political philosophy,* one discovers the extent to which the love of truth that is philosophy can be transformed into disdainful nicety, precisely. These

* *Philosophy, Politics, and Society*. Edited by PETER LASLETT. Basil Blackwell. 18s.

essays—with the exception of Professor Michael Oakeshott's memorable inaugural lecture and the editor's thoughtful reflections on "The Face to Face Society" (it is not clear why either should have been gathered into such a company)—all represent, and are intended to represent, work done by the school of "linguistic analysis." This is now, one gathers, *the* British school in the sense that, though it may not be the largest in numbers, it has pre-empted the attention of the young. The book does not put forward the very best in this school—neither Professor Gilbert Ryle nor Professor A. J. Ayer is included, for example. But it does convey a distinct impression of the school as a school.

And there is no mistaking the fact that this is a very British school indeed. It is almost as if there had been a deliberate effort to caricature the "Englishness of English philosophy," with all those famous English virtues wildly exaggerated: the detestation of sham and artifice, the plain-speaking, the almost supernatural sensibleness; and with all those famous English vices wildly exaggerated too: the parochialness, the horror at Big Questions, in short the quasi-philistinism. The paradoxical result is that both virtues and vices have been utterly trivialised: the sensibleness has been incorporated into an absurdly mechanical routine; and the philistinism has become less an active humour than a sullen and carping mood. It is the difference between the tone of the older "no nonsense!" and the newer "nonsense!"—the one impatient to get things done, the other wearily explaining *ex post facto* that the things that were done, were not well done.

The English tradition in philosophy always managed to be extraordinarily productive as well as distinctively English; it answered, or tried to answer, all sorts of important questions; and it aimed at world honours—to establish universal truths that would command a universal assent. Today, the heirs to this tradition have resigned from the game and are content to play the rôle of the fifth man at bridge. They will always tell you why the contract went down, but they never take a hand. Sometimes they are acutely right; sometimes they are blindly wrong; but, human nature being what it is, they are always intolerable.

IT IS not clear whether these British philosophers have withdrawn from the world, or whether they are honestly unaware of its existence. Whatever the case, the effect of parochialness is striking. There are plenty of footnotes in this volume. Mostly they are to essays and books by other members of the school—though William Wordsworth and Lewis Carroll, having been quoted, get their credits too. But I did not

find a single reference to contemporary American, or French, or German philosophers. When Mr. W. J. Rees, in his essay on "The Theory of Sovereignty Restated," refers to "the traditional" theory of sovereignty, it takes us some pages to discover that he means Austin, Dicey, Bryce, Bosanquet, T. H. Green, *et al*—no foreigners allowed. When "the history of political theory" is mentioned, the odds are that what is meant is the history of political theory in England between Hobbes and T. H. Green. When Mr. Renford Bambrough in the course of a discussion of "Plato's Political Analogies," refers to "recent work on the origin of philosophical problems and doctrines," it turns out that what he has in mind are articles that have appeared in British philosophical journals. Sometimes this can be serious as well as peculiar: Margaret Macdonald's essay on "Natural Rights" would have been much improved if, instead of reinventing the pragmatist theory of valuation, she had taken notice of the work of John Dewey and his disciples—and of his critics, too.

There is a cool complacency in these essays; not a stammer to distinguish one well-bred voice from another, no real discussion, only the pitter-patter of public instruction. The modest "I suggest" followed by a platitude; the difference between *necessary* conditions and *sufficient* conditions, always italicised lest we miss the point; the distinction between *can* and *must*, or *must* and *ought*, again always italicised—is this what goes on in *learned* journals (my italics this time)? It is understandable that they should talk down to us; but it is surprising to find them talking down to one another, as from a rostrum.

I do not mean to imply that these men are arrogant. On the contrary, their humility is positively alarming. True, they act as if they know it all; but they insist that the all does not amount to very much. This book introduces us to a new kind of political philosopher, one with a deep anti-political bias, who violently disclaims not only political intentions but political wisdom as well. I do not know a parallel—outside of certain religious sects—for a group of thinkers so vigorously denying any special competence to their political opinions; usually it is the reverse. All they claim is some skill in analysing the rhetoric of—not politicians, God forbid! but—other political philosophers. Unfortunately they are not always too impressive at that, because if they are good at logic they are poor at history, and are inclined to take it for granted that the textbook's summary of, say, Rousseau or Hegel or Hobbes is what these thinkers really had in mind. But more important than any passing deficiency is their ultimate intention, which pushes modesty to the point of suicide: where

the New Criticism in literature tediously explains its texts, in philosophy the New Criticism smugly explains them away, and there is grave danger of philosophy in England becoming a subject without subject-matter. What, one wonders, is to happen to all those questions about the Good Society and Justice and Political Morality which, if they are only academic table-talk in England, are very substantial matters elsewhere in the world? It is certainly true that a great deal of nonsense has been spoken in their names. But there are more important things in life than not speaking nonsense; and a devotion to truth is not quite the same thing as a devotion to other men's fallacies. After one has pointed out that the word "law" is used in many different and confusing ways, there remains the problem of when a citizen has the right and duty to disobey the laws of his country—a real

and urgent problem in some parts of the world, but one which these political philosophers do not regard as any of their business.

A philosophy for Little England—I do not think that it is either a harsh or incorrect description of the state of mind behind the application of "linguistic analysis" to politics. It is a mind very much at home in the world, and its world is England, and its England is, if not the best of all possible worlds, then at least the most English of all possible worlds—far more English, indeed, than the real England of the real world. Its England is civil beyond description; not to be tempted into foreign entanglements; neat and tidy and self-satisfied. In less fortunate countries, men may dream of the City of God, or have nightmares of the underworld. These happy few have placidly settled in their new towns; their lives are unhaunted, and their sleep is dreamless.

Irving Kristol

'TWIXT HEAVEN AND HELL

WYNDHAM LEWIS started his literary career with a *blast* of "vivid and violent ideas." They were expressed sensationally with the avowed object of compelling the attention of the public. Late one evening in July 1914, he turned up, as I well remember, at a little party in Bayswater followed by a trotting procession of half a dozen members of the Rebel Art Centre each carrying a large volume under his arm—the first number of *Blast*, red-hot (magenta red) from the printers. And now, just forty-one years later, comes another *Blast*, still so full of "vivid and violent ideas" as to have shaken the BBC out of its dogmatic slumbers, inducing it to give some hours of Third Programme time to broadcasting *The Human Age**—one of its boldest and most sensible experiments.

The first part of *The Human Age*, *The Childermass*, was published in 1928. It is only now that with *Monstre Gai* and *Malign Fiesta* we have the continuation of this ambitious work, and I find it more significant, more splendid, than I had dared hope for. The whole will be a sort of grand finale and summing-up of all that Mr. Lewis has been thinking and doing in the last forty years.

I do not forget that during most of that time he has been as much painter as writer—producing massive abstract paintings, steely portraits,

and other graphic work neither quite abstract nor representational, which bodied forth his visual comments on reality. But the imagination that works in his painting is, of course, the same imagination as works in his writing, though in the latter we may be more aware of the extraordinary variety of his interests—so various indeed as to have been a handicap to his worldly success; he has again and again bewildered his publishers by doing something which nobody expected from him. In his first novel, *Tarr*, immature as it was, he struck an authentic Wyndham Lewis note which his admirers expected to hear again. In describing the unbalanced lives of a number of Bohemians living in Paris he stripped his characters to the bone and showed them talking, gibbering, gesticulating, in the precincts of art. He did something of the same kind in *The Apes of God*, though here he was less concerned to depict the passions of men and women as the hollowness, the grotesque absurdity of the self-conscious imitative social animal conspicuous in the decade following the first war. And then he would surprise his public by inadvertently writing a book on Hitler (before anyone knew much about Hitler) or on economics (on which he was not really an expert), or on international politics and bankers (about which he had queer ideas); and then more novels, varying in theme and quality; and slashing attacks on whatever at given moments excited his ire. He was an omnivorous reader and a prolific writer. But in whatever he did,

* *The Human Age: II. Book 2, Monstre Gai; Book 3, Malign Fiesta.* By WYNDHAM LEWIS. Methuen. 30s.

and equally in books that fell short of their aim, there was nearly always lucidity and quite always force, masculine, muscular, sometimes menacing. There was humour, too, often fierce and scourging; but not always; it could be gentle and genial, as in *Rotting Hill*, and even in *The Human Age*.

IN *The Human Age* Mr. Lewis passes on from this world to the next—to the existence of man after death, a ghost on the way to Purgatory, Heaven or Hell, a product of his own past and of the designs of the superhuman agents of God and the Devil. It is characteristic of the author that he appears to be as much at home in an other-worldly existence as in this; in the latter his romantic imagination is always peering at something which is grotesquely other-worldly, so that when we get beyond the Earth there seems to be no fundamental change. With him humanity and super-humanity have always been inextricably involved, the obscene with the divine, the divine with the obscene.

His account of the universe, being a work of imagination and not a metaphysical or theological treatise, is anthropomorphic. All the poets who have transported us to non-terrestrial regions have necessarily described shapes such as might conceivably have been seen with human eyes. Homer and Virgil, Dante and Milton were compelled to give human shape and human thoughts to their ghosts or angels. Mr. Lewis has for his object to do for our time nothing less than Dante did for his; and, I might add, with equal faith—not the same faith, of course, but his own faith, that which governs his attitude to experience. It is a terrific nightmare of a world to which he takes us, but not worse than or so very different from the nightmare which he sees on earth. It is because he is so interested in the essential bone shapes of contemporary society that he takes us here to see them writ large in an angelic or demoniacal environment.

But it must not be overlooked that this trilogy is a novel, and not only a novel but a thriller, full of action and wild adventure, with rollicking scenes and boisterous naughtinesses, with fighting, tumult, blitz, and cosmic eruptions described with terrific force. We can read it if we like simply as a very exciting story. In *The Childermass* we had already been introduced to James Pullman, recently deceased, who had been a famous author on earth, a very independent, "unattached" man, "of the fierce modern genius type, believing not in God, in class, in party, but solely in himself"; and with him the ridiculous Satters, the man who had been his fag at school, and remained nothing more than a peevish schoolboy all his life. These two at the beginning of *Monstre Gai* have left the tem-

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porary selection camp of *The Childermass* and are seen approaching the Magnetic City, or Third City, to which an important being known as the Bailiff has secured their admission.

THE Bailiff is a Dickensian character, quite as alive as any Quilp or Fagin or other Dickensian monster of iniquity—he has a gay wit, a shrill cackle, a plausible tongue, and smells slightly. Pullman takes to him more than he does to the Padishah, the ostensible ruler of the City, “a supernatural being of great charm, but devoid of the slightest trace of gumption.” Why Lucifer should aspire to the conquest of this city is not clear, since his representative the Bailiff has enjoyed the reality of power there and the Celestial representative has made so poor a job of it. From the first Pullman was horrified by the appearance of the residents. They had the “faces of nonentities”; “this humanity was alarmingly sub-normal, all pig-eye or owlsh vacuity. Was this a population of idiots—astonishingly well-dressed?” This “degenerate, chaotic outpost of Heaven” seems to be a Purgatory gone wrong—originally intended to be *provisional*, it has now become “practically a permanent place of drooling residence” where

all the *mediocrities* deliberately admitted by the Bailiff, living without work, without the call to perpetuate their species, become more and more childish, oafish, and offensive. The Bailiff, however, is able to explain the matter plausibly. The fact seems to be that Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory, like the Earth, have become modernised. In the Age of Faith there was a dazzling white Heaven and a good coal-black Hell, but all that is out of date. In the modern age “we no longer see things in stark black and white”; “the *Good* and the *Bad* are blurred.” The Devil today “is a very unconvinced *devil*, and our Padishah . . . is a very unconvinced *Angel*.” “I know both,” says the Bailiff, “so I know what I am talking about.”

Transported with his fag to the Infernal City, Pullman at first finds it even less attractive than the Third City, but with his usual fortitude satisfies his curiosity by a tour of inspection of the quarters in which the damned are ingeniously and horribly tortured. Satan, however, turns out to be an attractive fiend—as he always has been—in spite of his hatred of the human race and his puritanic loathing of women; and he confides in Pullman that he has decided to resign the post to which God had appointed him—that of administering tortures to the damned. He was bent on new designs against Heaven; he would bring it crashing down by “arranging for the contamination of the angel nature.” He was going to “mix it up with the pettiness and corruption of mankind.” He was going to “force upon it woman—with all her sexishness, her nursery-mind, her vulgarity.” And it is only towards the end that Pullman, who has been drifting more and more into active alliance with the Devil, hears with horror of the Deity’s message to the evil one: “This is, up to date, your greatest sin”—the “humanisation of the angel population.”

Mr. Lewis’s work may be regarded as an allegory of the conflict—or the diminishing conflict—between good and evil, or a Philippic against the increasing depravity of man, or a story of epic proportions about the strange adventures of a daring egoist. He might be convicted, I think, of innumerable inconsistencies—for instance, no one dies in the Third City, but residents are frequently killed. But in the realm of the marvellous—not the less marvellous because all-too-human—the inconsistencies are trifles. The world as he has shown it in other books has always been half-demoniacal, and in this book we only have the reverse of the picture, a supernatural world that is more than half human. A fantastic, monstrous, but triumphant feat of creative imagination.

R. A. Scott-James

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